



BATMAN

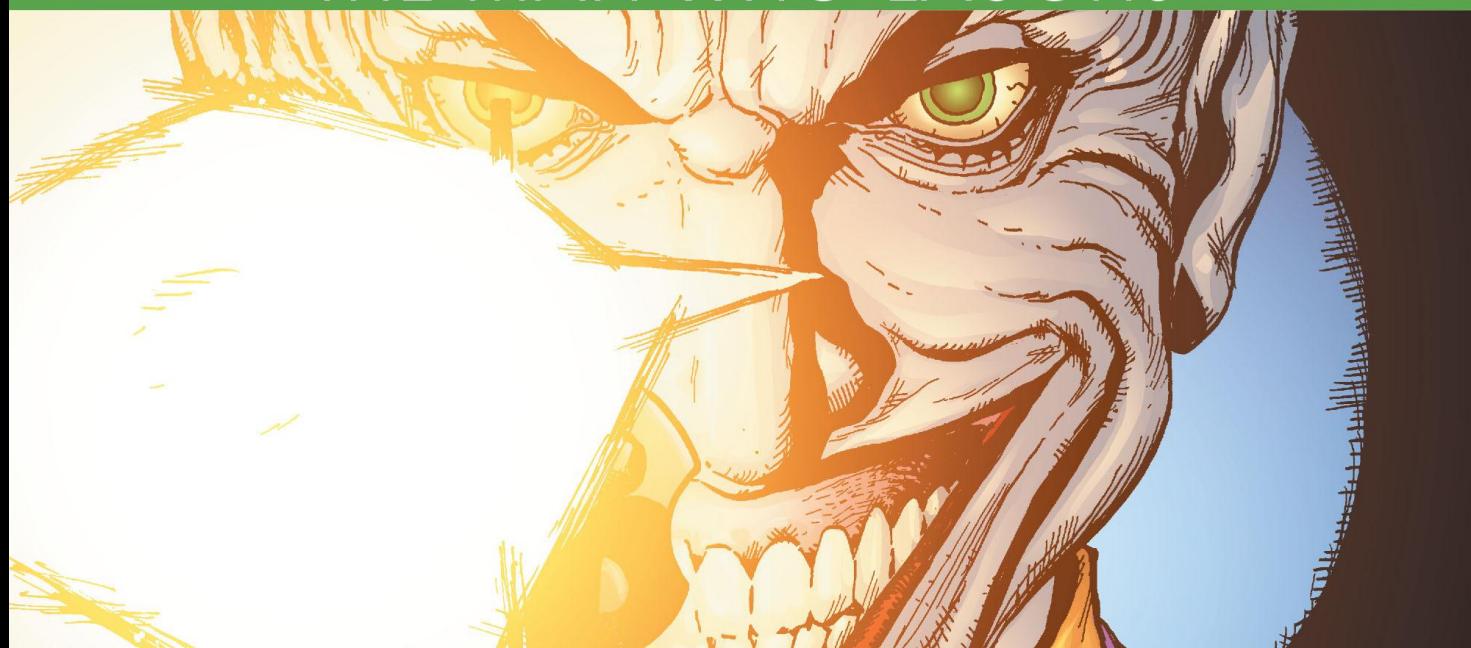
THE MAN WHO LAUGHS

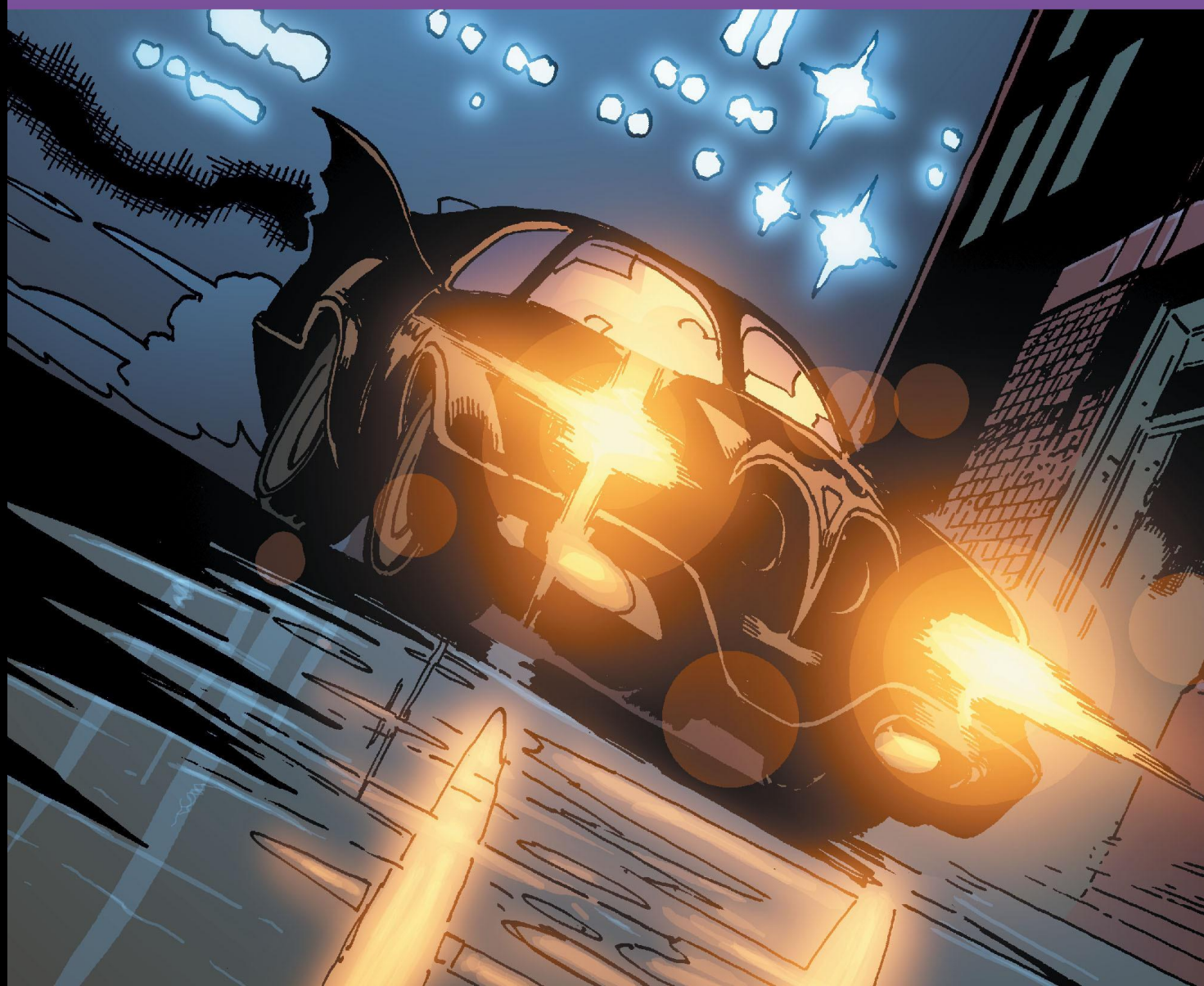
ED BRUBAKER / DOUG MAHNKE / PATRICK ZIRCHER / AARON SOWD

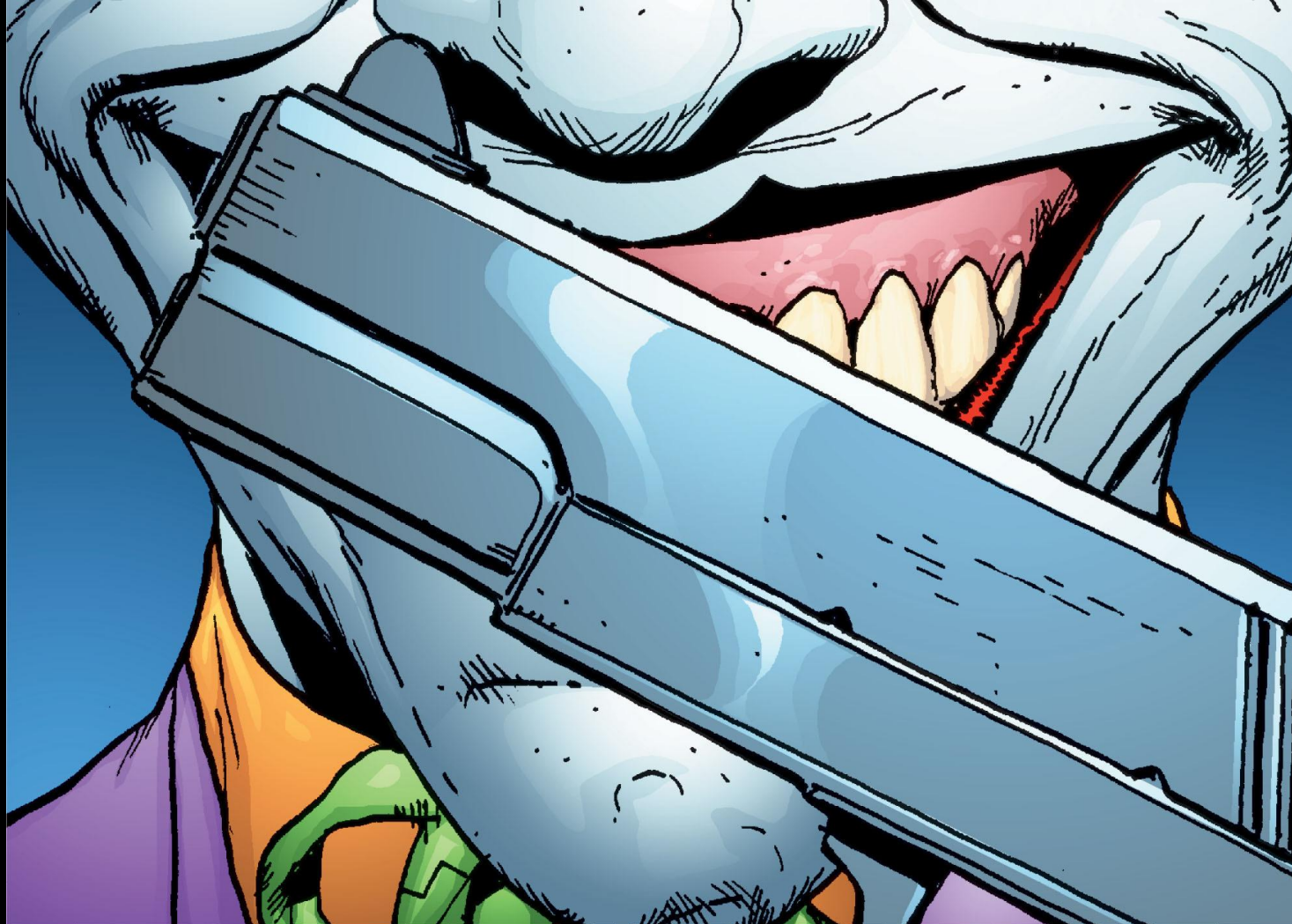


BATMAN

THE MAN WHO LAUGHS







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THE MAN WHO LAUGHS

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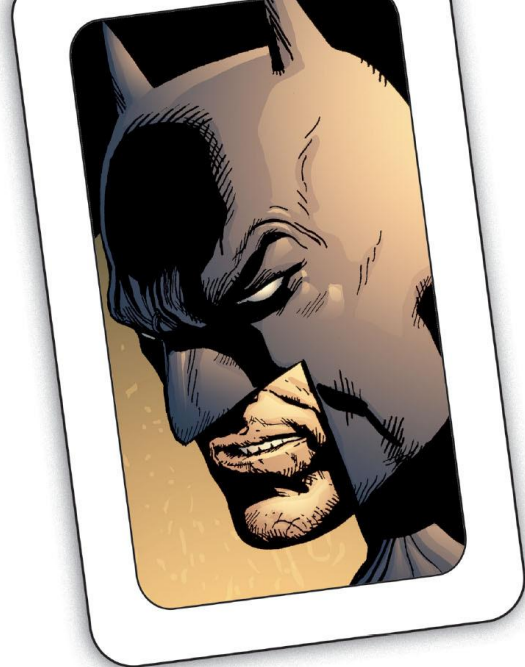
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Cover illustrations by Doug Mahnke.
Cover color by David Baron.

BATMAN: THE MAN WHO LAUGHS

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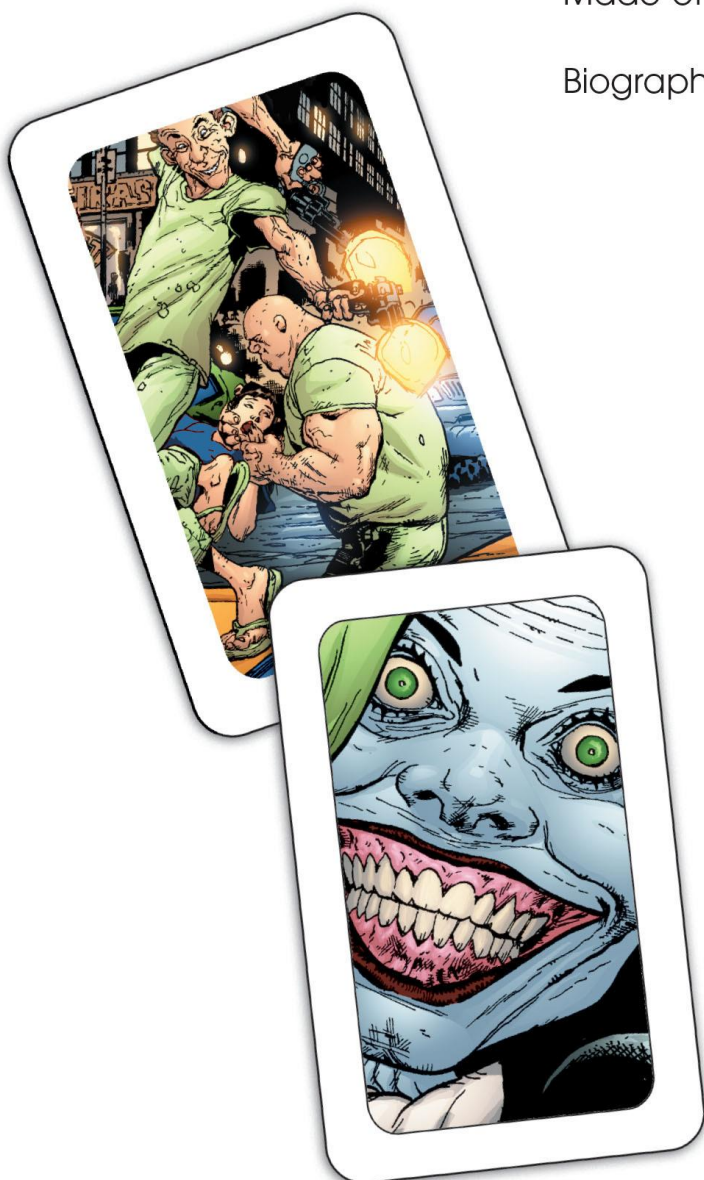


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THE MAN WHO LAUGHS

Art by Doug Mahnke

Color By David Baron

Lettering by Rob Leigh

With thanks to Shawn Moll





I get to the scene a little after four a.m., just as they're bringing out the first body...



Vincent and Maroni both have nearly twenty years in on the force, and they look like they just had their guts ripped out.



A paramedic nearly drops the stretcher because he can't stop himself from throwing up.



What the hell is happening to my city?



HOW MANY MORE LIKE THAT INSIDE?

EIGHT OR NINE, AT LEAST... COULDN'T SAY FOR SURE, CAPTAIN.



Three hours ago a homeless veteran stumbled into this abandoned factory, looking for shelter from the storm...

Poor soul.

Beat cop found him running down Broadway screaming his lungs out ten minutes later.

I don't blame him. I've been in combat, seen plenty of dead bodies...

...But I've never seen anything like this.



Still, I'm not all that surprised, all the changes Gotham's been through in the last year...

Like the Batman trying to wage a one-man war on crime and corruption.

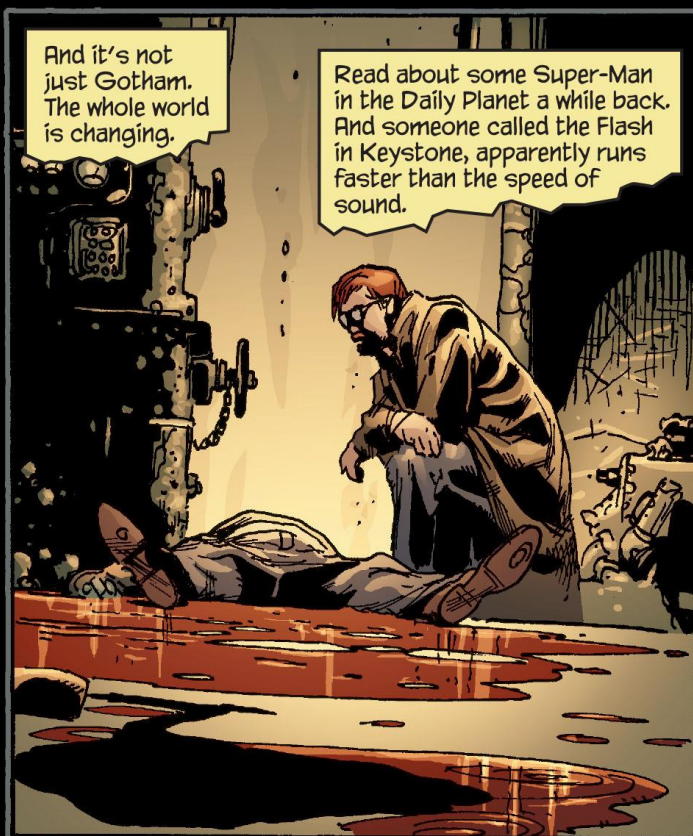
Helped me take down a lot of crooked cops and got the mob's hand from around the city's throat. For a while, at least.

But in the end, no matter how you look at it, the landscape of the city has changed.

That Red Hood character a few months back was the first sign.

Fool running around in a costume taking down scores. Disappeared the first time he got a look at Batman, though.

But since then, it's just been a waiting game. Waiting for more of these freaks to start crawling out of the woodwork.



And it's not just Gotham. The whole world is changing.

Read about some Super-Man in the Daily Planet a while back. And someone called the Flash in Keystone, apparently runs faster than the speed of sound.



I guess this is my world now...

...Cops and killers and gun-metal blue, and people who do things like this.



CAPTAIN GORDON.

I WAS HOPING YOU'D BE HERE...



...WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I THINK IT'S BAD.



SOME OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DEAD FOR NEARLY A MONTH.

I THINK WHOEVER DID THIS WAS PRACTICING ON THEM...

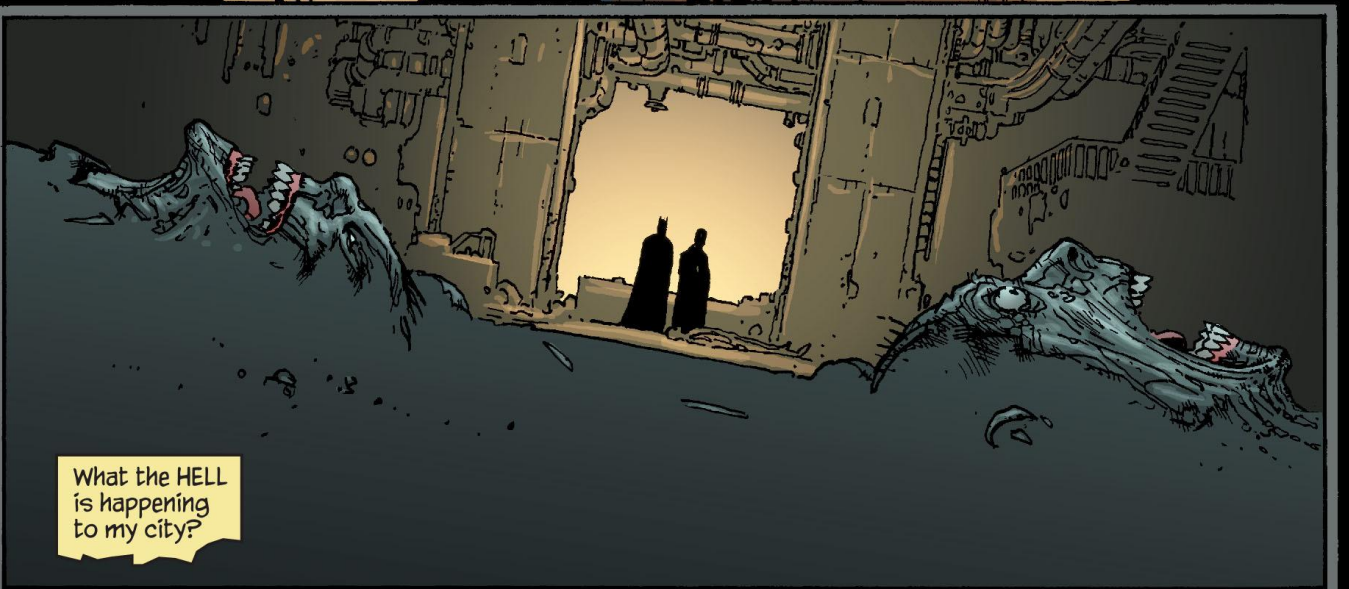


GOOD GOD...



AND I THINK THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING.

OH... GREAT...

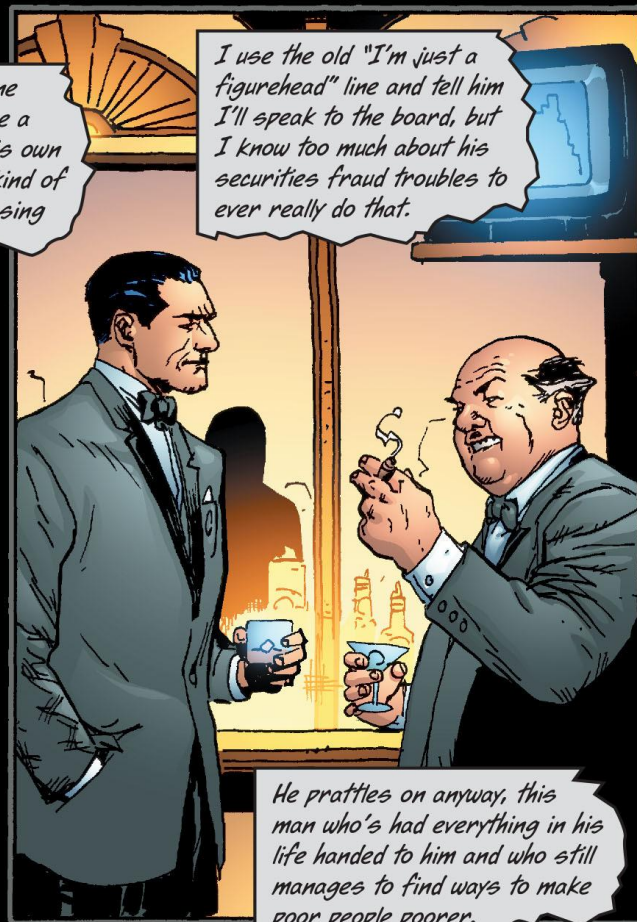


What the HELL is happening to my city?



Dinner with Henry Claridge at the Gotham Gentlemen's Club is boring. More so than most of the functions Bruce Wayne is invited to, even.

Claridge wants Wayne Industries to finance a joint venture with his own corporation, some kind of new chemical processing factory.



I use the old "I'm just a figurehead" line and tell him I'll speak to the board, but I know too much about his securities fraud troubles to ever really do that.

He prattles on anyway, this man who's had everything in his life handed to him and who still manages to find ways to make poor people poorer.



I pretend to listen, mulling over the details from last night's crime scene.

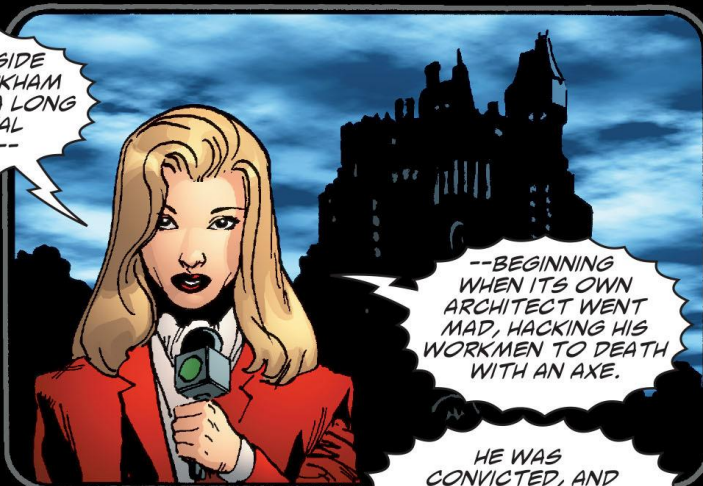
What kind of mind would create such horror?



--LIKE THIS, FOR
EXAMPLE. WHOSE
TAX DOLLARS DO
YOU THINK IT WAS
PAID FOR ALL THAT
RENOVATION?

--JUST TWO
WEEKS AWAY FROM
ITS SCHEDULED
REOPENING.

JUST OUTSIDE
THE CITY, ARKHAM
ASYLUM HAS A LONG
AND BRUTAL
HISTORY--



--BEGINNING
WHEN ITS OWN
ARCHITECT WENT
MAD, HACKING HIS
WORKMEN TO DEATH
WITH AN AXE.

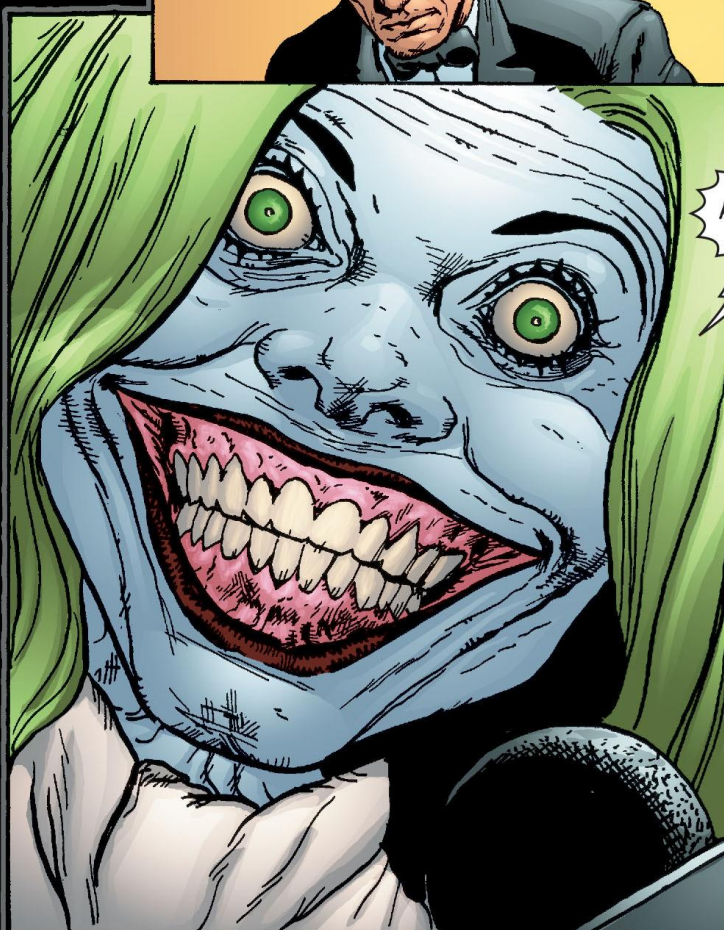
HE WAS
CONVICTED, AND
SENTENCED TO SPEND
THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN
THE SAME DARK HALLS
THAT HAD SENT HIM
OVER THE BRINK.



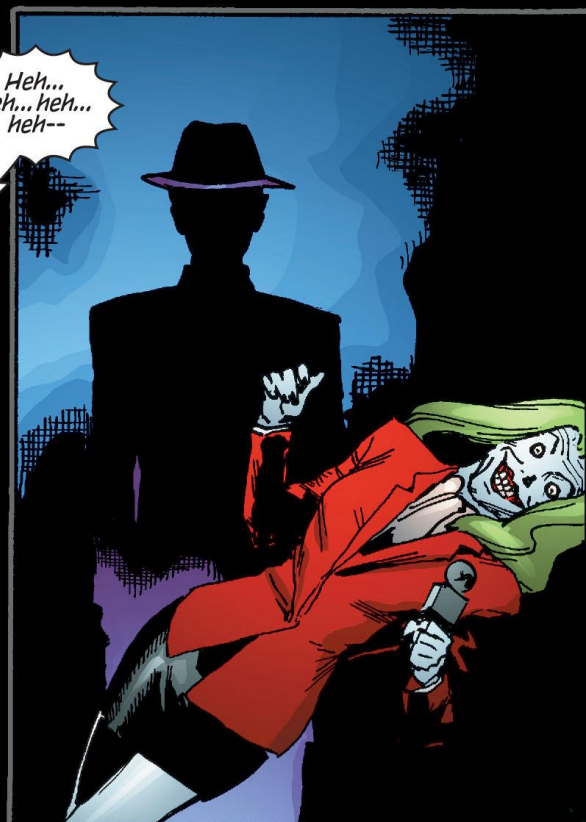
HOPES
REMAIN HIGH,
HOWEVER, THAT THIS
NEWLY RENOVATED
STRUCTURE WILL--
cough! cough!

EXCUSE
ME--
->cough!
cough!->

->cough!
cough...ak...
ah...hem!->



Heh...
heh... heh...
heh--

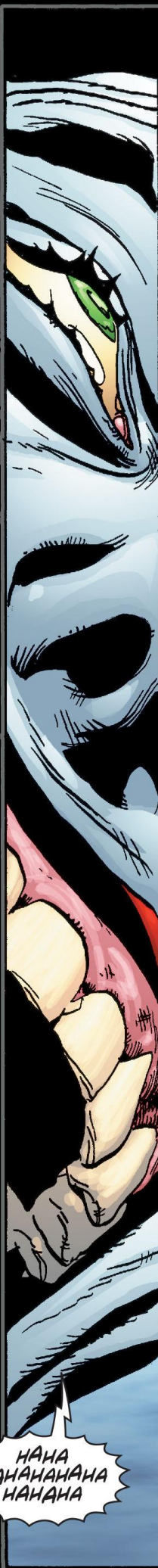


GOOD EVENING,
GOTHAM AND
GOTHAMITES
EVERYWHERE...



...THOUGHT
I'D TAKE TIME OUT
OF MY OH SO BUSY
SCHEDULE TO SAY HI AND
MAKE A FEW NOT SO
VEILED THREATS...

...SO,
HELLO--GOODBYE,
YOU'RE ALL GOING
TO DIE.



HAHA
HAHAHAHAHA
HAHAHA

SORRY,
SOMETIMES
I JUST I KILL
ME...



ESPECIALLY
WHEN I THINK
ABOUT KILLING
YOU.

BUT HEY,
BEFORE WE GET
TO THE WHOLESALE
DESTRUCTION PART
OF OUR LITTLE
TERROR
EXPERIENCE...

...LET'S PICK
OUT A FEW OF OUR
FAVORITE SONS FOR
A SPECIAL SHOUT
OUT...

HENRY
CLARIDGE--
I'M LOOKING AT YOU,
OLD BOY...AND YOUR
FUTURE LOOKS DIM,
INDEED...

IN FACT,
IF I WERE A
PSYCHIC, I'D SAY
THAT THE BELL
WOULD CERTAINLY
BE TOLLING FOR
THEE TONIGHT AT
MIDNIGHT.

OH, WHAT
THE HELL, I'LL SAY IT
ANYWAY--YOU DIE AT
MIDNIGHT, HENRY. AND
THEN WE CAN ALL HAVE
A GOOD LAUGH AT
YOUR EXPENSE.

BANG!

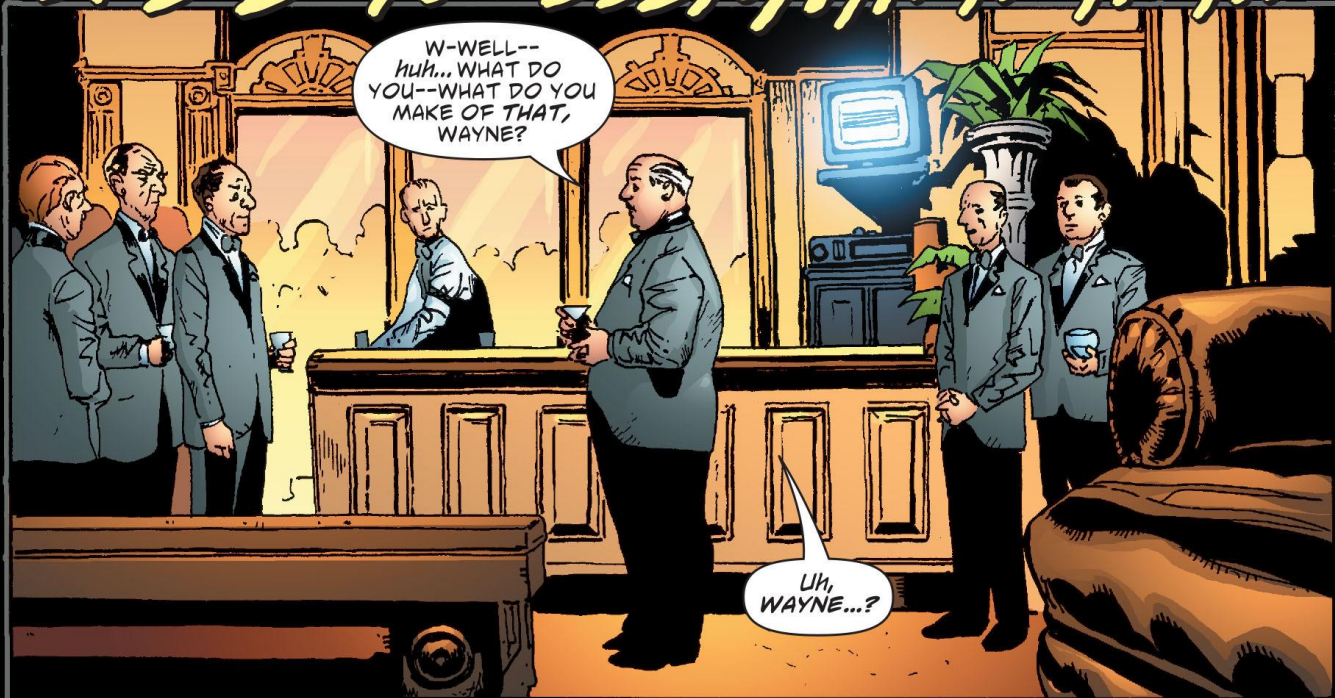
NOW, WHAT THE HECK IS THIS? I GUESS YOU JUST CAN'T TRUST OLD AMMO...

LUCKILY, I BROUGHT A BACKUP...



HAHA
HAHAHAHA
HAHA

SSKSSSKKKSSSHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH



W-WELL--
HUH... WHAT DO
YOU--WHAT DO YOU
MAKE OF THAT,
WAYNE?

UH,
WAYNE...?

*This man--this KILLER--
will be long gone by the time
I reach the parking garage,
I know. But I hurry anyway.*

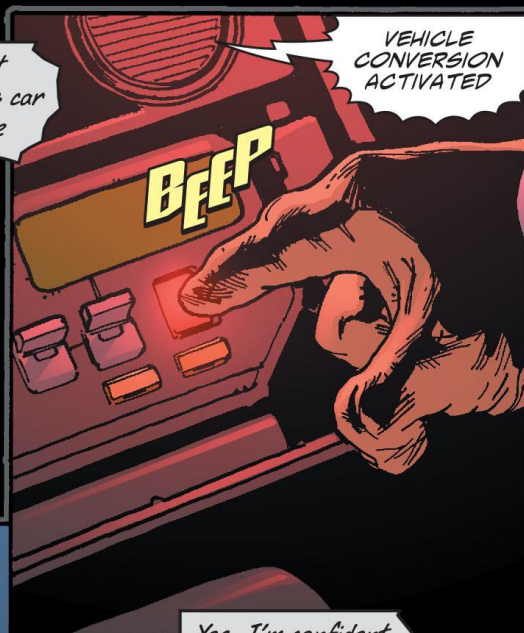


*If I'm lucky I can get to
the scene before the police
this time. Before they've
trampled over all the
evidence.*

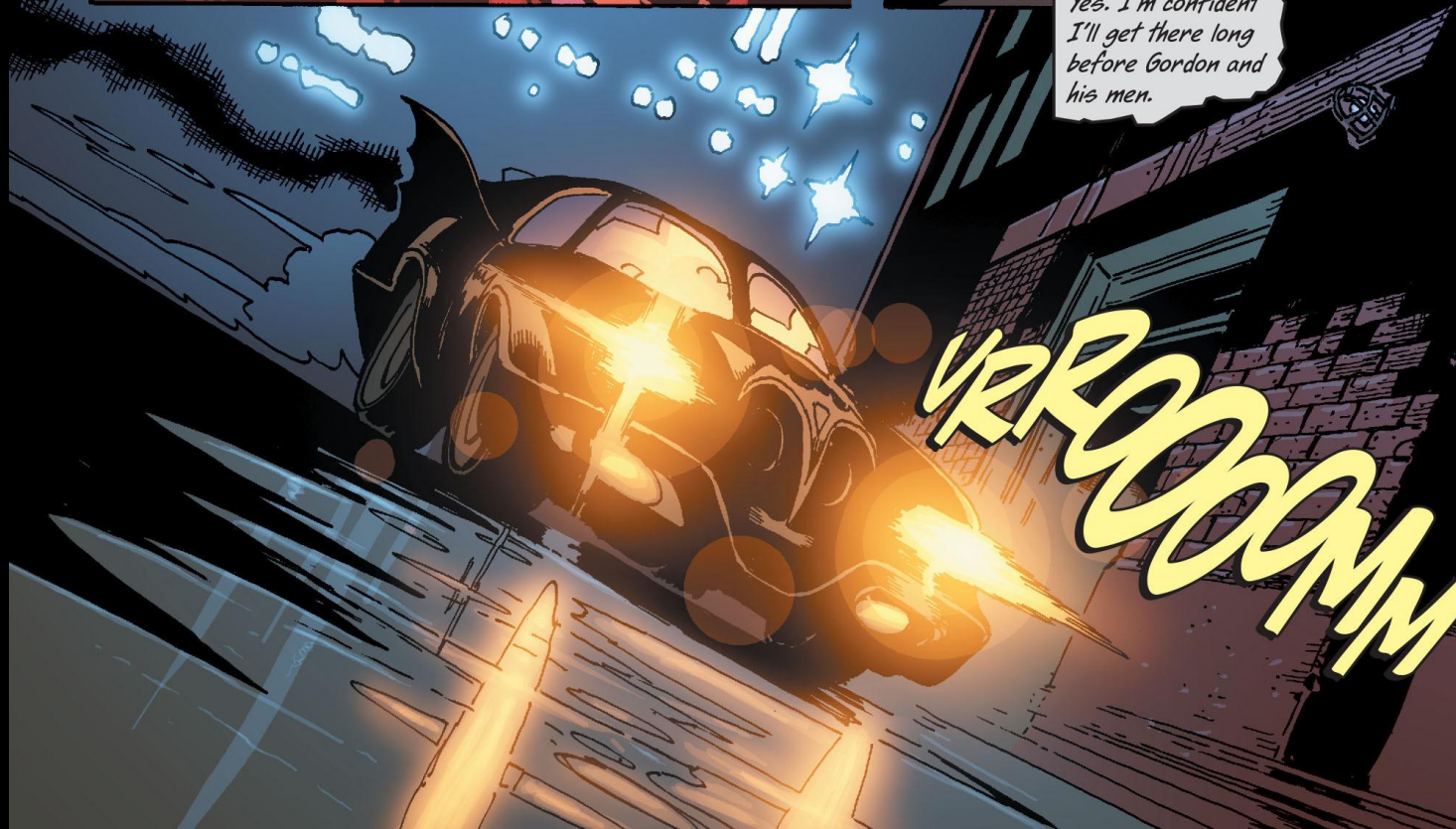
*But it's not all about
luck anymore. I've done
a lot to shave the odds
in my favor...*

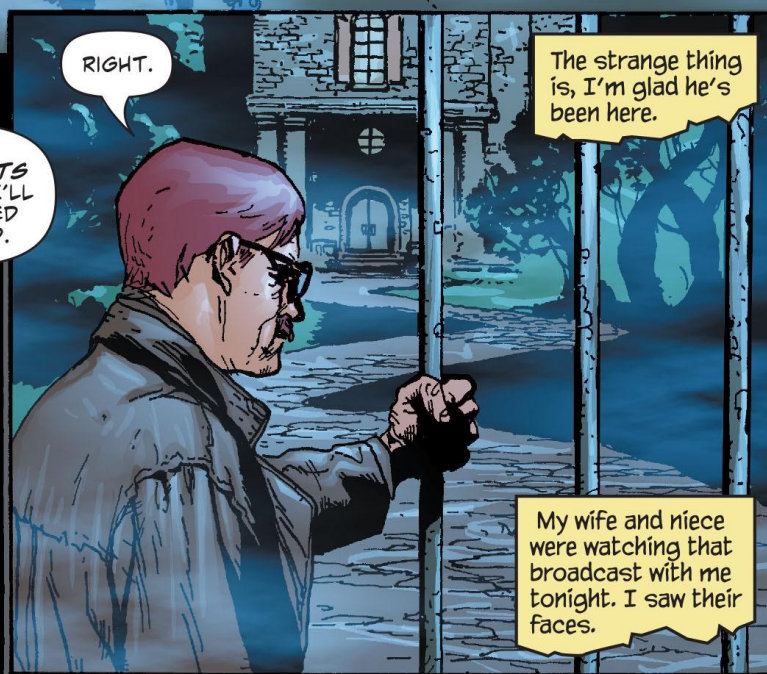
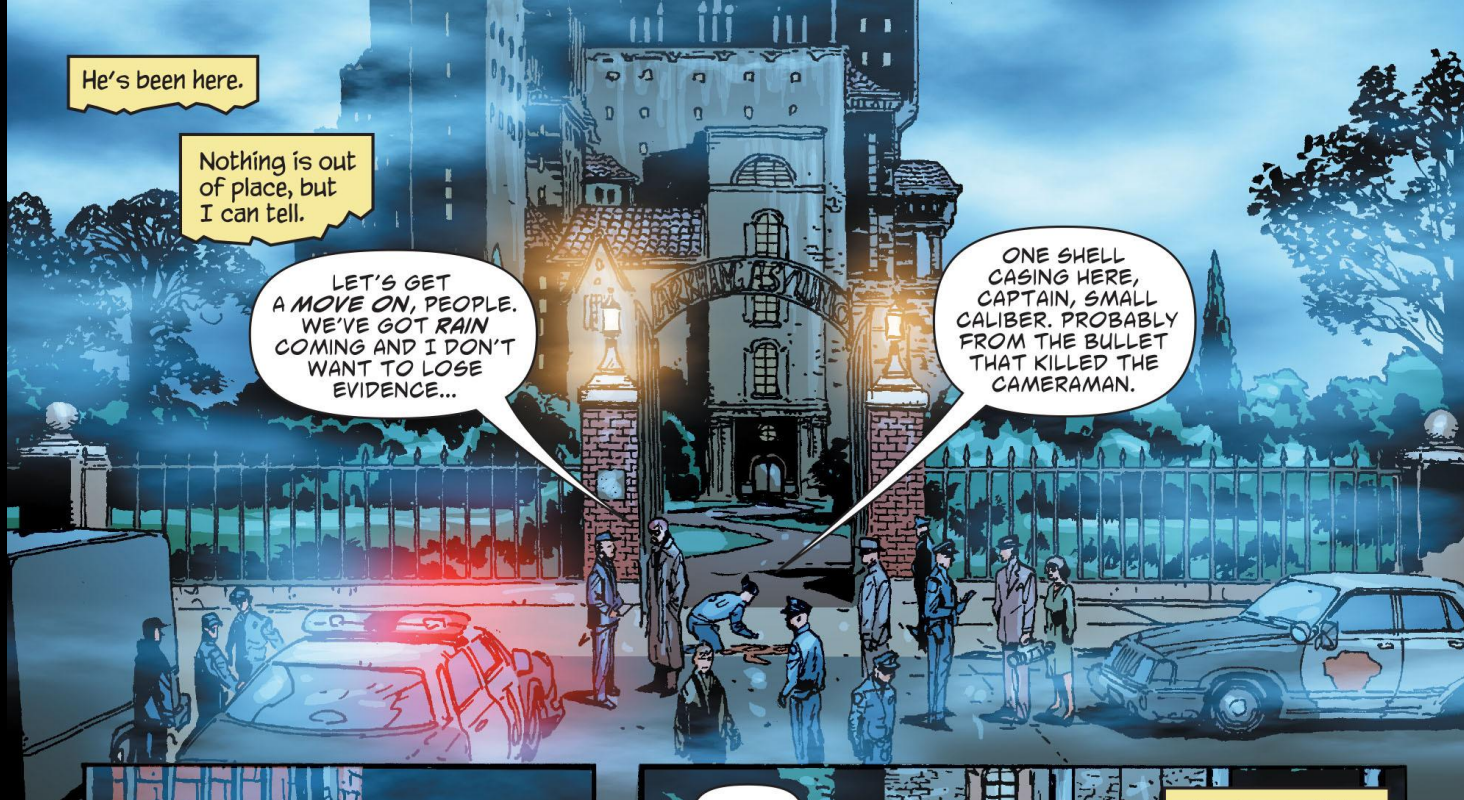


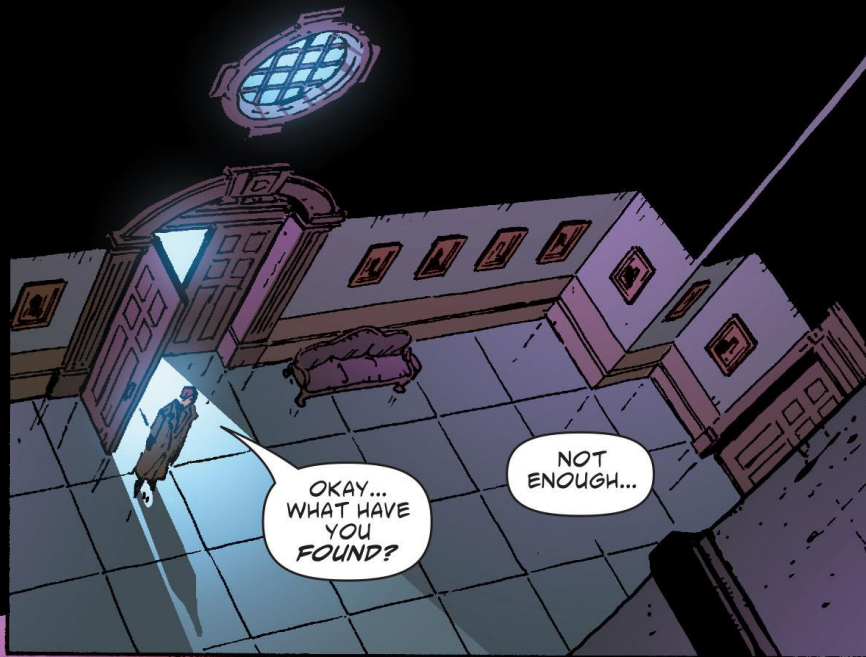
*...And it's about
time I gave this car
a trial run in the
real world.*



*Yes. I'm confident
I'll get there long
before Gordon and
his men.*









As it turns out, we don't have to wait until midnight for the city to go nuts.

By the time I get back to Central, they've already scheduled a press conference.

Commissioner Grogan makes me stand around as window dressing while the mayor lies to the media.



--SITUATION WELL IN HAND. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THIS MADMAN WILL BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE, AND SWIFTLY.

Like a true politician, making promises he can't keep. And who looks bad if things don't go smoothly or swiftly?



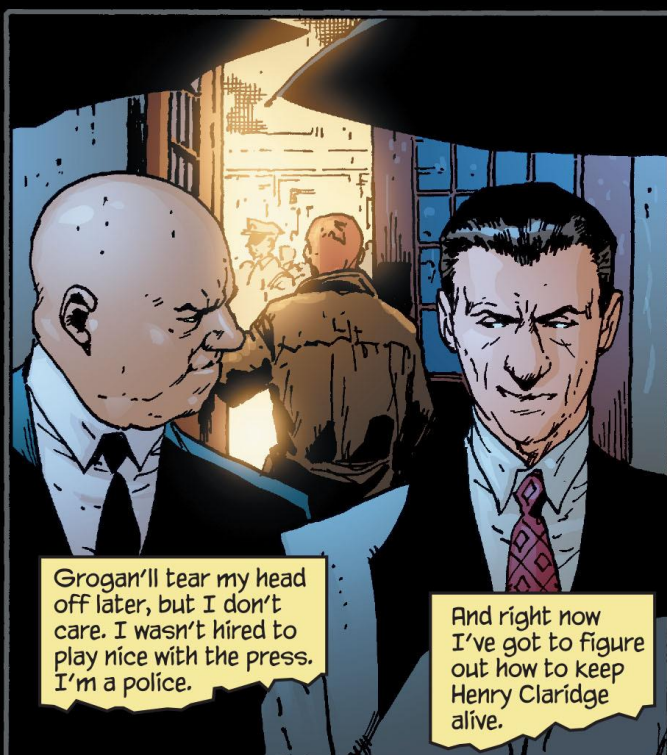
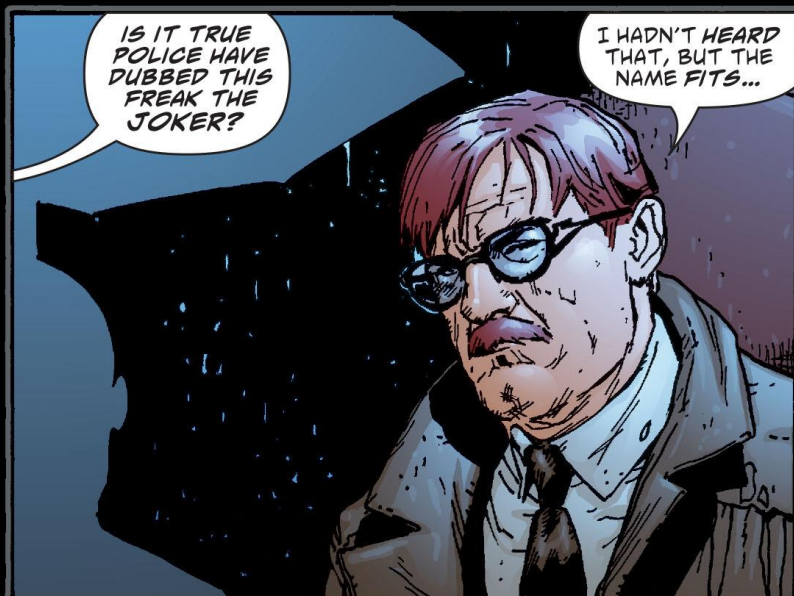
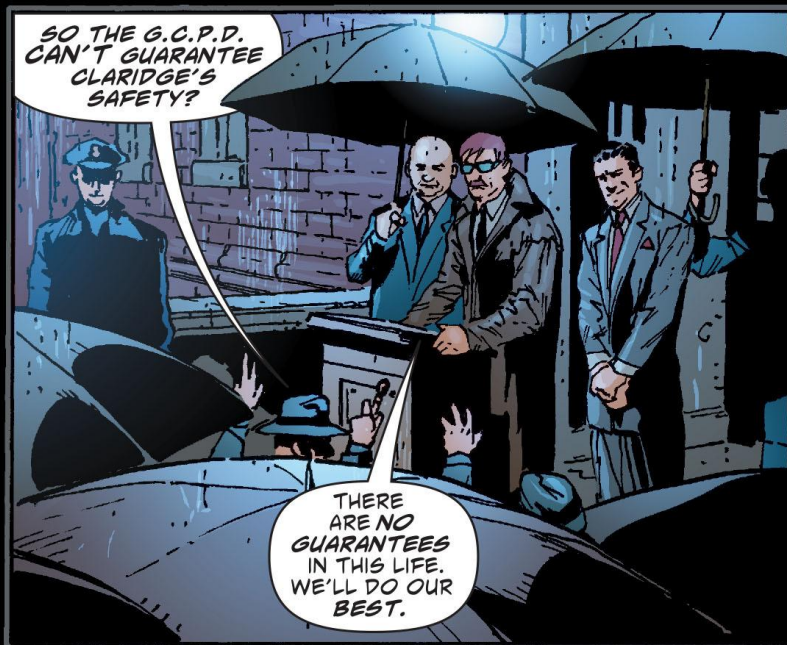
--CAPTAIN GORDON IS PERSONALLY RUNNING THE INVESTIGATION, AND YOU ALL KNOW JIM GORDON'S RECORD AS A HERO COP IN THIS CITY.

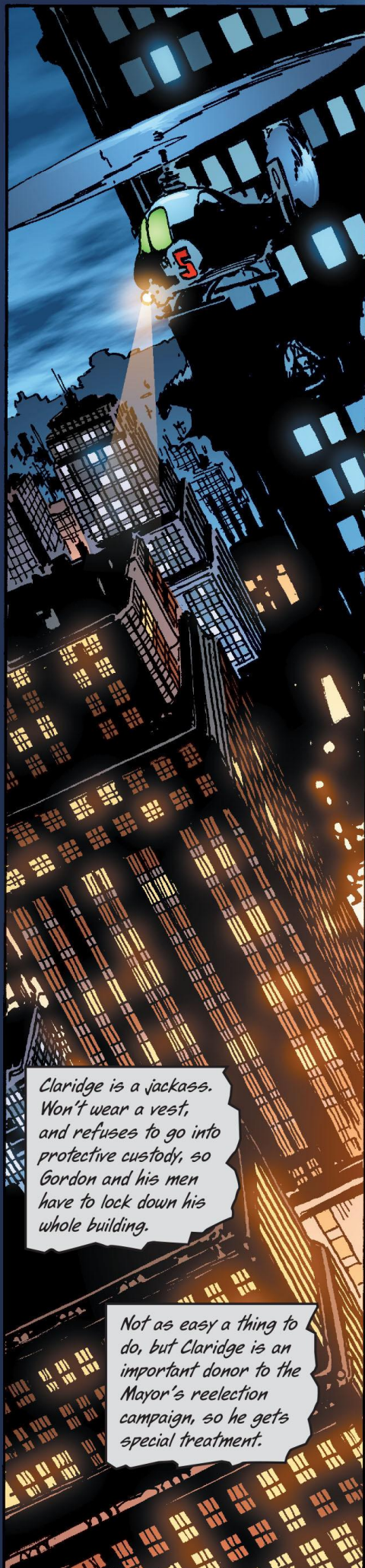
WE'LL TAKE YOUR QUESTIONS NOW.



GORDON! GORDON! IS HENRY CLARIDGE GOING TO BE SAFE TONIGHT?

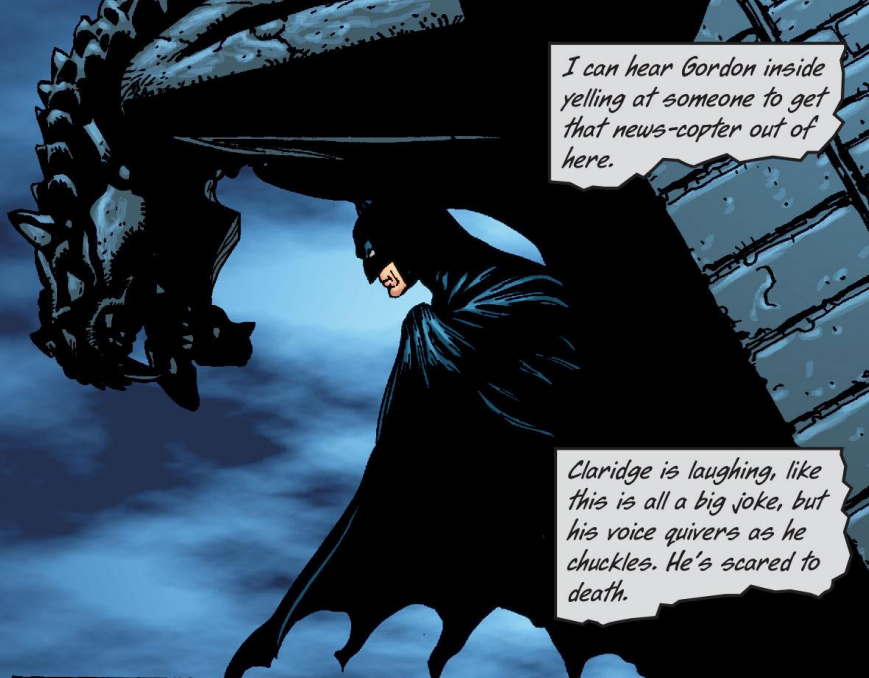
CAPTAIN GORDON! CAN YOU TELL US IF YOU HAVE ANY LEADS?

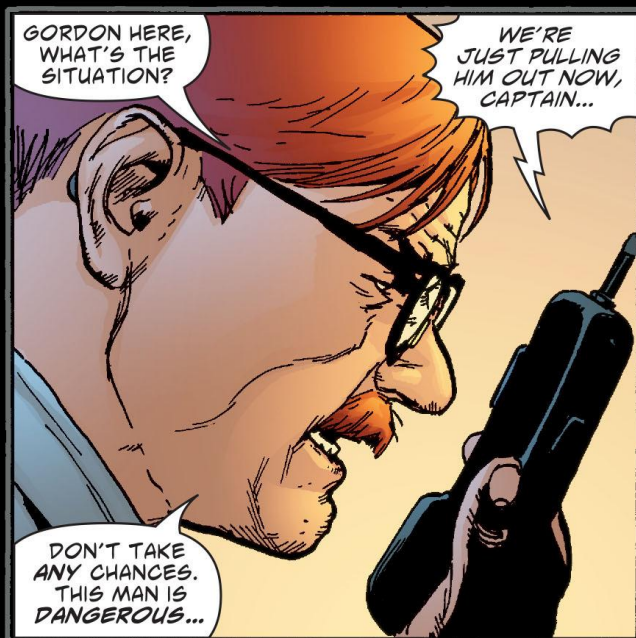




Claridge is a jackass. Won't wear a vest, and refuses to go into protective custody, so Gordon and his men have to lock down his whole building.

Not as easy a thing to do, but Claridge is an important donor to the Mayor's reelection campaign, so he gets special treatment.





...LOOKS LIKE
YOU WERE--
heh--YOU WERE ALL
WORRIED ABOUT
NOTHING--heh
heh... heh...

Wait. That quiver
in Claridge's voice
wasn't just
nervous laughter.

Damn it.

HA
HA HA HA
HA HA

HA HA--
GORDON--HA
HA-HELP--HA
HA HA-HELP--
HA HA

SKRA
POSS
SH

HAHA
HAHAHA
HAHA





A SITUATION.

I can hear the screams and car horns from six blocks away.



The Joker has played us all for fools.



Williams Medical Center, the facility that houses the criminally insane, is a block away from here.



Damn it. In a few weeks these men would have been out at Arkham, where they could only hurt each other.



They aren't responsible for their actions, I know.



I don't care.



I count two dead and eight injured.

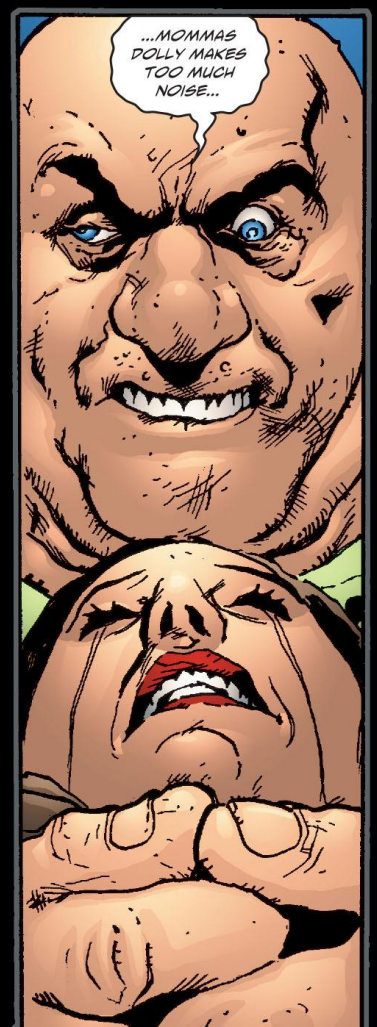


This stops now.



NOOO! GET AWAY!

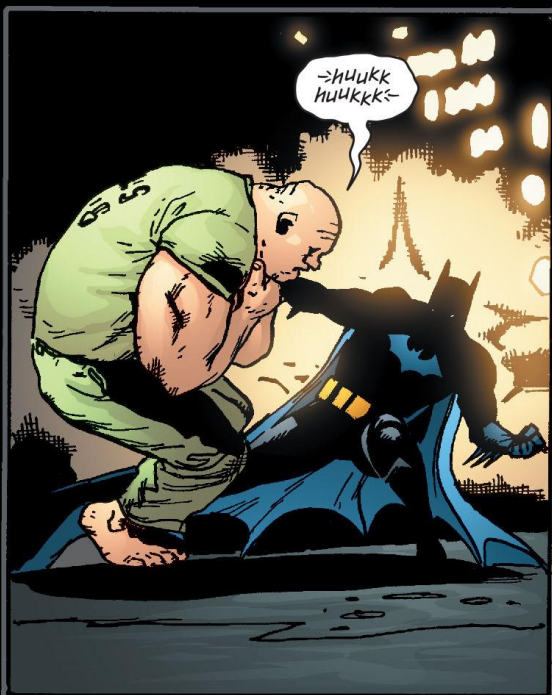
HELP ME!

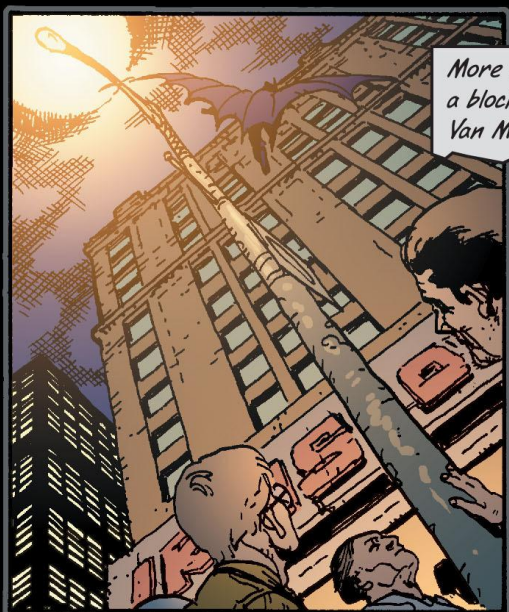


...MOMMAS DOLLY MAKES TOO MUCH NOISE...



NO FAIR,
I WAS
PLAYING!







BEFORE THE GUARDS COULD RUMBLE OUT OF THEIR HUB HERE, HE SPRAYED THEM WITH A MACHINE GUN...

GOT A STATEMENT FROM ONE WHO SURVIVED, SAID IT WAS THIS JOKER CHARACTER, FOR SURE...



"...SAID HE DIDN'T EVEN LOOK AT THEM, LIKE KILLING THEM WASN'T EVEN IMPORTANT."



NEXT HE TAKES OUT THE ORDERLY HERE AT THE DORMITORY DOOR, ONE SHOT BETWEEN THE EYES...

"KICKS OPEN THE DOOR TO THE PSYCHO WARD DORM..."



SORRY TO WAKE YOU...



...BUT I'M LOOKING FOR SOME VOLUNTEERS.

"...TOSSES OUT A BUNCH OF LOADED WEAPONS AS A GREETING TO HIS NEW FAN CLUB..."

"...AND INVITES THEM TO JOIN HIM FOR A NIGHT ON THE TOWN."



HOW DO WE KNOW ALL THOSE DETAILS?



GUESS HE'S TOO AFRAID TO EVEN LEAVE THE ROOM AFTER DARK, SO HE STAYED PUT.



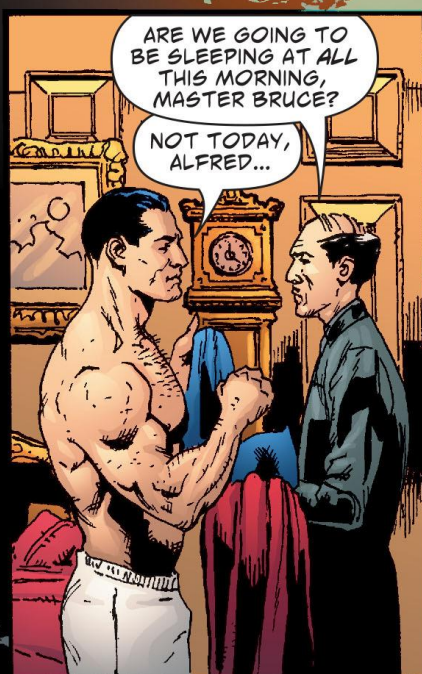
THANK GOD FOR SMALL FAVORS...





Only able to track down and capture six of the Joker's escapees before sunrise.

No sign of the rest, which means he now has ten insane men at his disposal, under his influence. I can only imagine what he wants with them.



ARE WE GOING TO BE SLEEPING AT ALL THIS MORNING, MASTER BRUCE?

NOT TODAY, ALFRED...



...I'VE GOT TOO MUCH WORK TO DO.



SO IT WOULD APPEAR. I DO INSIST, HOWEVER, THAT YOU GET AT LEAST TEN MINUTES' REST AND MEDITATION BEFORE GOING BACK OUT TONIGHT IN THIS...



Took a blood sample from the reporter killed yesterday, and another from Claridge last night.

Hopefully I'll be able to analyze this poison.



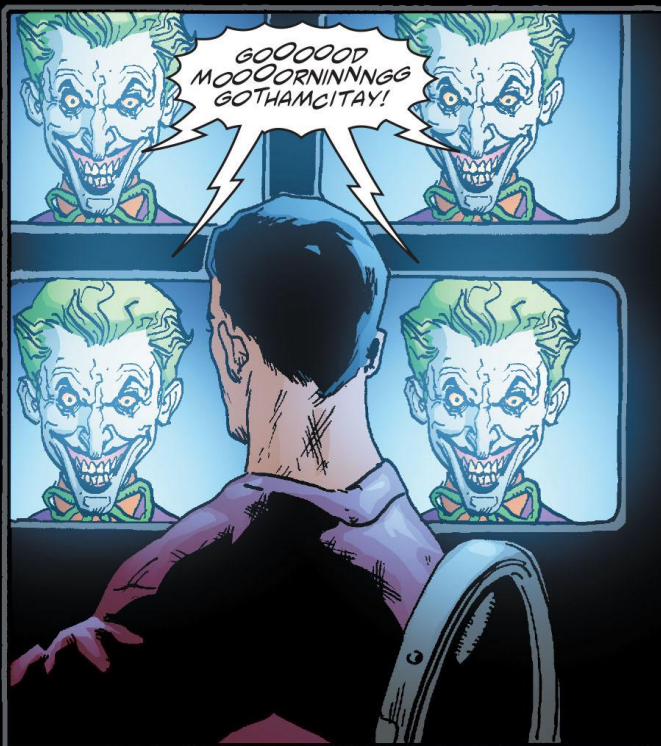
Must be two variants, fast-acting and slow-acting, which may help me know what to look for.



If my hunch is right, and I'm sure it is, Claridge had already been exposed to the poison before Joker made his announcement.



Just as I get the chemical analysis running in the computer, Gotham's new nightmare makes a command performance...



GOOOO
MOOOORNNINGG
GOTHAMCITAY!

LOOKS LIKE GOOD
OLD HERO COP JAMES
GORDON WAS UNABLE TO
STOP THE FULFILLING
OF MY PROPHECY
LAST NIGHT.

BUT DON'T
LET IT GET YOU
DOWN, JIMMY BOY,
SOME THINGS ARE
JUST FATE! HA HA
HA HA HA HA!

AND AS WE ALL
SAW ON THIS MORNING'S
WONDERFUL NEWSCASTS,
I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF ALL
THAT DISTRACTION TO HELP
FREE SOME POOR
MISUNDERSTOOD
SOULS...

WHAT A
PARTY WE HAD
LAST NIGHT,
I TELL YA!

OH, THE
HORROR!

HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA!

AND HEY, I'VE
GOTTA SAY, I LIKE
MY NEW NAME...
THE JOKER

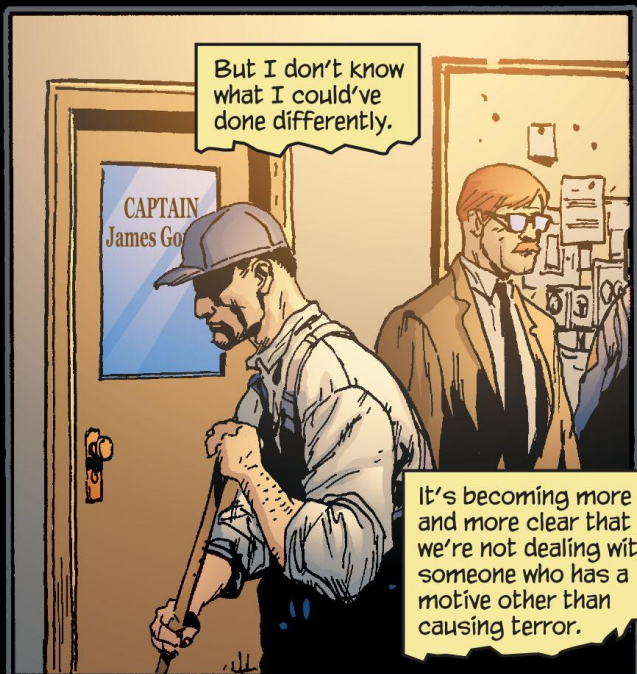
FUNNY
THAT I DIDN'T
THINK OF THAT...
HA HA...

SO, I BET
YOU'RE ALL ASKING
YOURSELVES, WHAT
CAN OLD JOKER
DO TO TOP
LAST NIGHT'S
SHOW?

HOW
ABOUT
ANOTHER
DEATH-
MATCH?

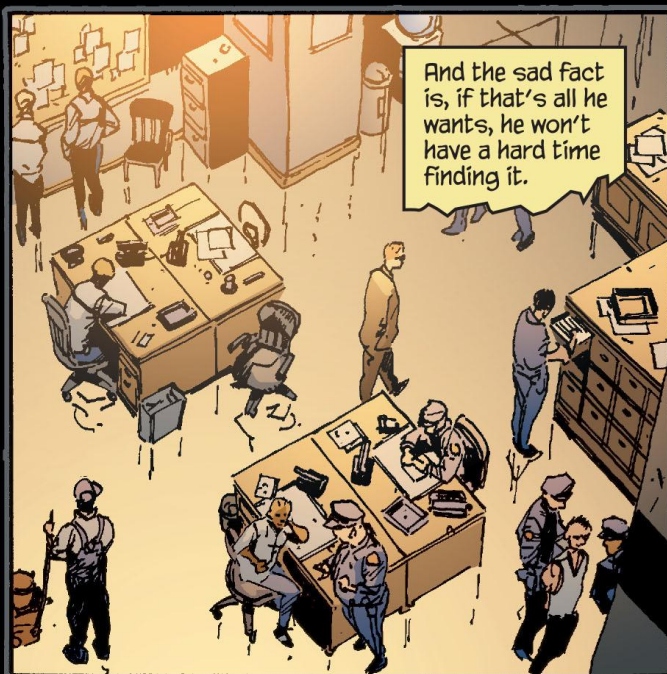
**LOCAL MILLIONAIRE
SELLS OFF COMPANY**

JAY W. WILDE,
THE HAND OF
FATE POINTS YOUR
WAY! YOU DIE AT
MIDNIGHT!

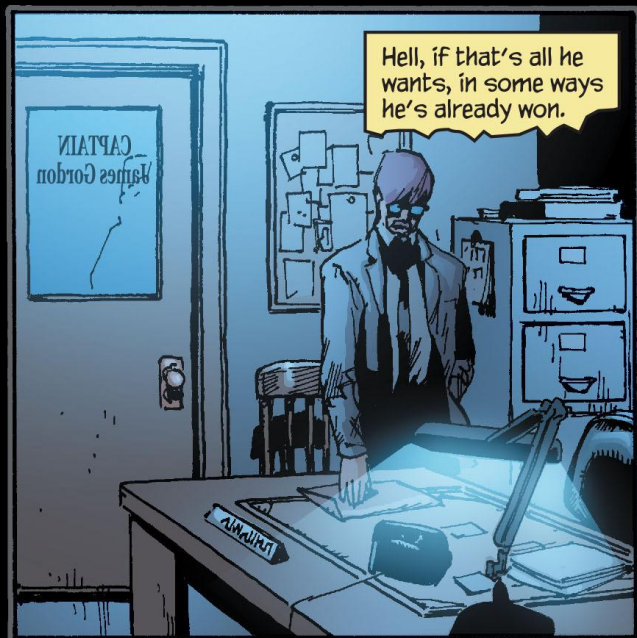


But I don't know what I could've done differently.

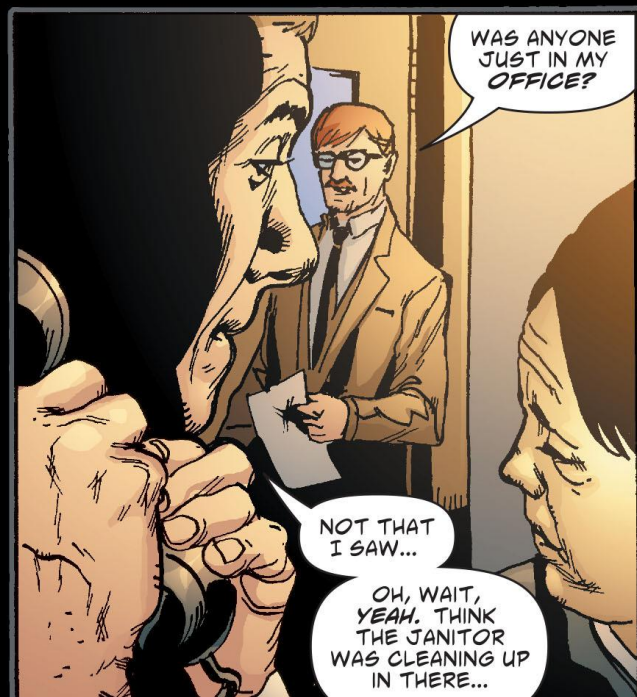
It's becoming more and more clear that we're not dealing with someone who has a motive other than causing terror.



And the sad fact is, if that's all he wants, he won't have a hard time finding it.



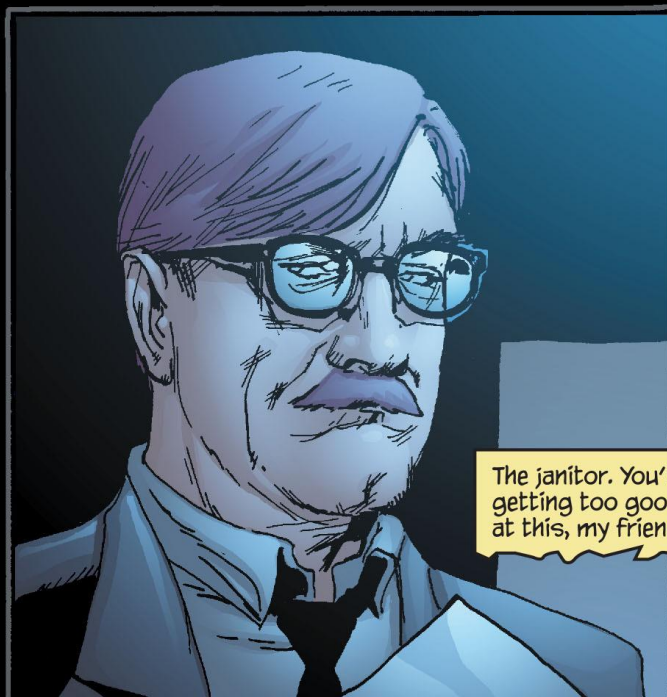
Hell, if that's all he wants, in some ways he's already won.



WAS ANYONE JUST IN MY OFFICE?

NOT THAT I SAW...

OH, WAIT, YEAH. THINK THE JANITOR WAS CLEANING UP IN THERE...



The janitor. You're getting too good at this, my friend.



Jay Wilde spends the day undergoing a battery of tests, but the only thing we find is high cholesterol. No time-released poison is in his system.

Turns out he was on the West Coast until the wee hours of the morning and arrived home just in time to hear the threat against his life.



So, if the Joker wasn't able to get to Wilde before his announcement, then he must be planning a direct assault.

I tell my men to expect the worst. They do.

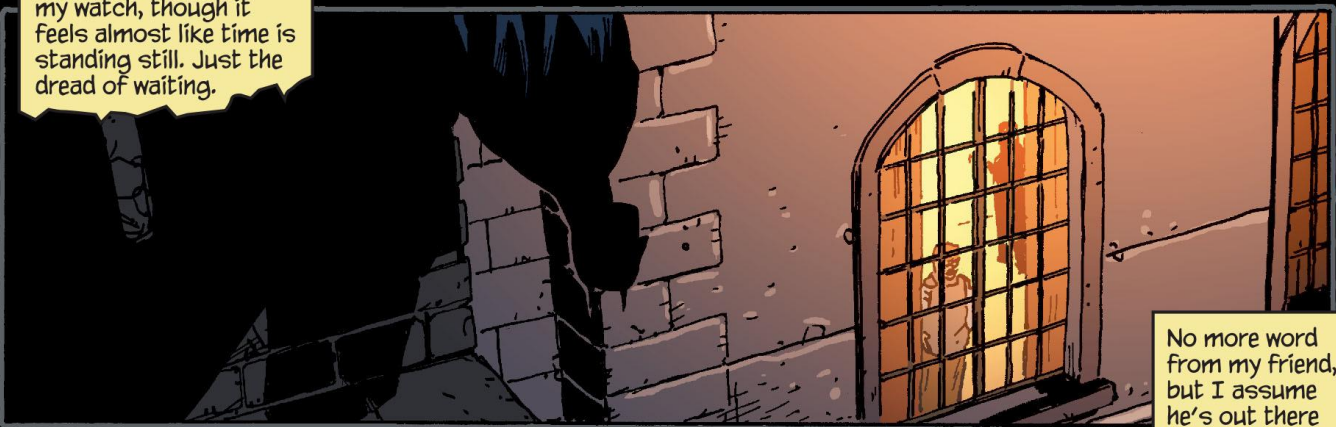


Luckily for us, Wilde's home has a top security system, and as it's separated from the city around us, it's a good place to protect him.



Though why I can't get these news-copters out of the area, I don't know. Tomorrow morning I'm yanking some licenses. Damn vultures.

Can't stop looking at my watch, though it feels almost like time is standing still. Just the dread of waiting.



No more word from my friend, but I assume he's out there somewhere...



THIS IS GORDON, WHAT'S IT LOOKING LIKE OUT THERE?

ALL QUIET SO FAR, CAPTAIN...

ALL RIGHT, KEEP ME POSTED.



Every cop in Gotham is working a double shift, and the streets are practically deserted.

Thank God for that. Too many innocent bystanders died last night. I can't have any more on my conscience.



YOU SHOULD REALLY HAVE THAT MASK AT THE READY, MR. WILDE.

OH, UH... YES, I SUPPOSE SO. WHAT, UH-- WHAT TIME IS IT?

ELEVEN FIFTY-EIGHT...



YOU MUST BE SLOW, CAPTAIN, I'VE GOT MIDNIGHT ON THE DOT...

NO, I'VE GOT THE CORRECT--



DAMN THOSE HELICOPTERS, WHAT THE HELL DOES HE THINK HE'S DOING?



OH, HELL...



GET
TO WILDE,
DAMN IT!

KEEP HIM
SAFE!



HE'S
IN THE
HOUSE!

Too smart, creating all that chaos and cutting the power at the same time.

Be rushing in here with night-vision goggles on any second now.

DON'T PANIC! THAT'S WHAT HE WANTS!

Let's see how he likes a surprise of his own...

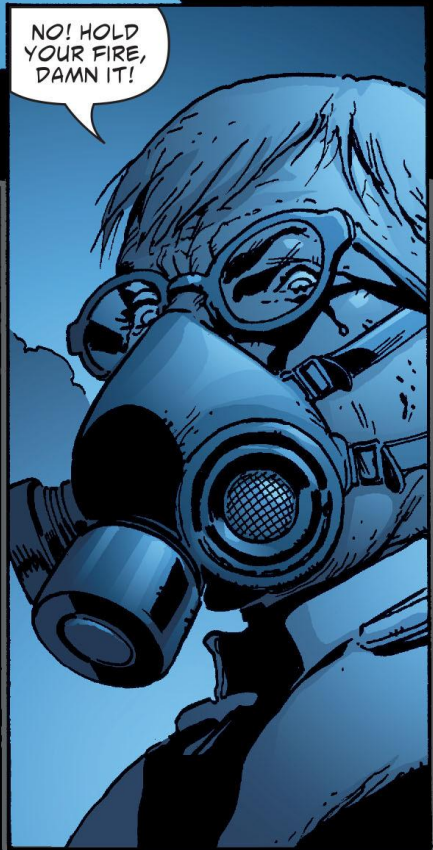
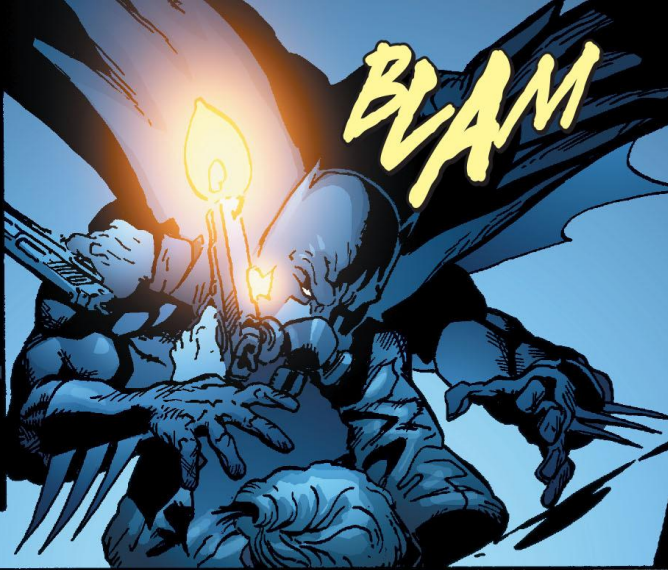
BLAM BLAM

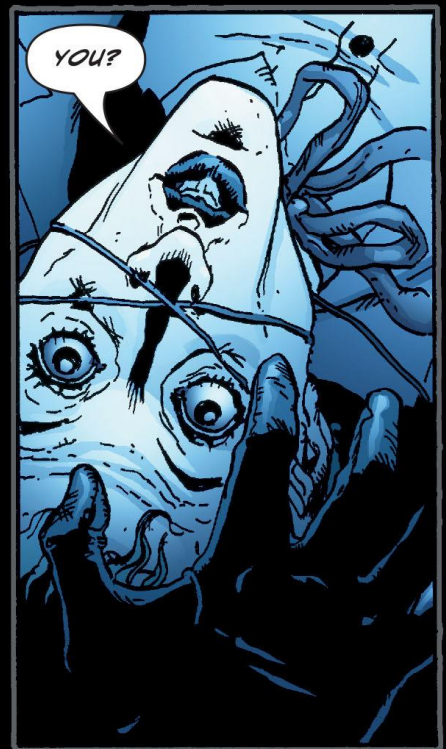
HAHA
HAHAHA
HA!

Flashbang. Should blind Joker even more than the cops, since he's wearing the night-vision.

HEY--

--WHO
PUT ON THE
LIGHTS?



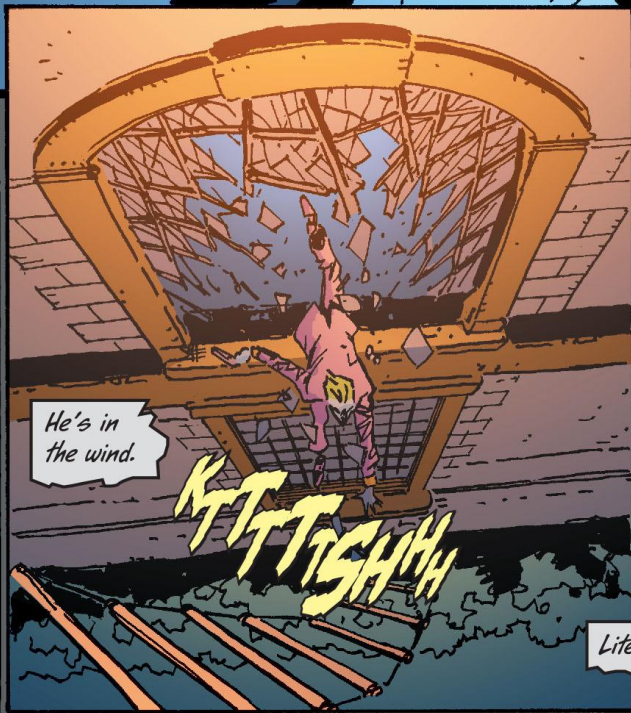




BLAM

BLAM

One chance is
all he needs.



He's in
the wind.

KTTTISHHH

Literally.



And inside, Gordon
is finding out what
I already know.
Jay Wilde is dead.



I've failed.

But hopefully
not entirely.

WHEEE BOOWHEEE OOOO

According to the coroner's report Gordon gets rushed through the next morning, Wilde was grazed by one of the Joker's bullets, which was laced with poison.

Probably one of the shots he fired as I threw the flashbang.



And my hope for anything but failure from last night is met with more disappointment. The tracking device I attached to Joker isn't transmitting.

Tracking Device



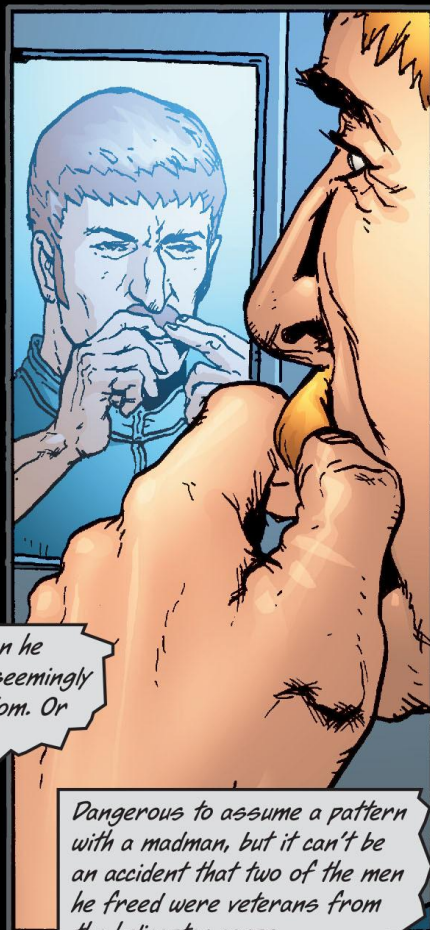
NO SIGNAL

Either it got damaged, or he's somewhere that blocks the signal. Possibly the sewers. Have to check on that later.

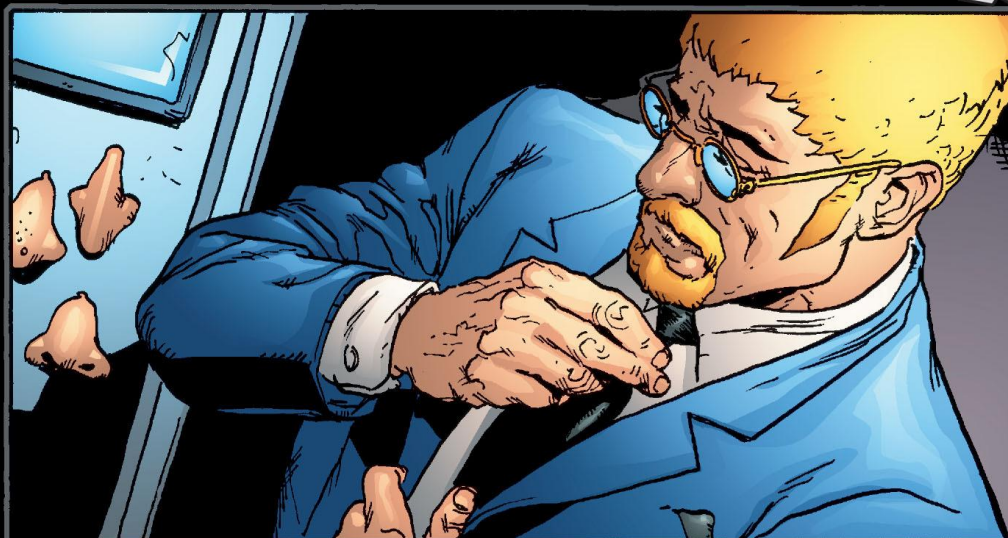
So what am I left to work with? All I have is his victims.



Two men he picked seemingly at random. Or did he?



Dangerous to assume a pattern with a madman, but it can't be an accident that two of the men he freed were veterans from the helicopter corps.



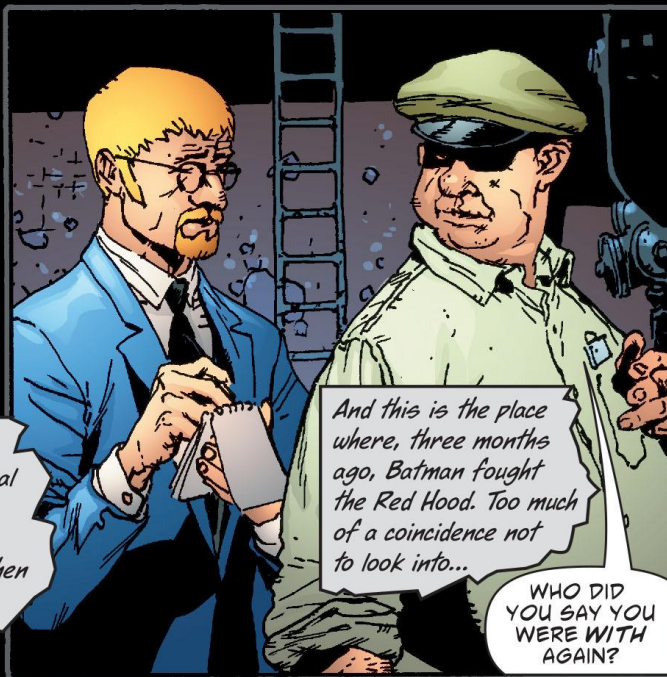
Have to believe there's a method to his madness, or I'm just stumbling blindly.

So I'll follow the only lead I have...



There were numerous links between Wilde and Claridge; both were investors and on the boards of many different corporate entities.

But the only one that sticks out is Ace Chemical Processing. Wilde and Claridge were the main investors in the plant when it opened 20 years ago.



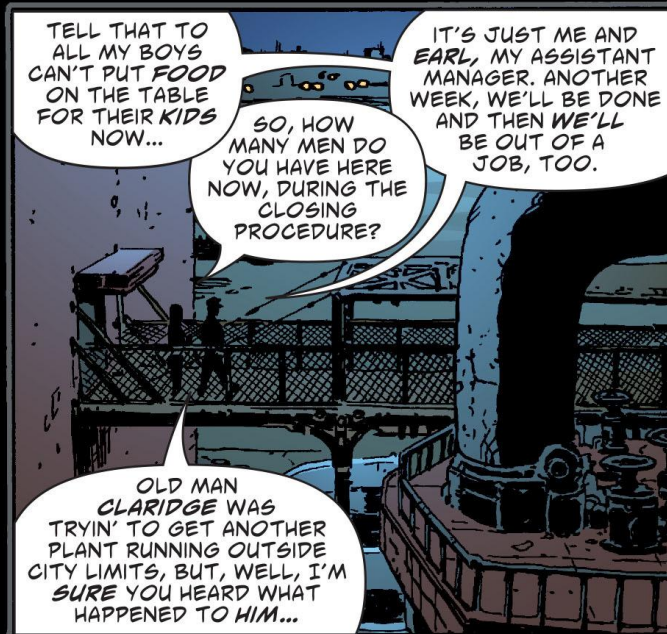
And this is the place where, three months ago, Batman fought the Red Hood. Too much of a coincidence not to look into...

WHO DID YOU SAY YOU WERE WITH AGAIN?



THE NATIONAL GLOBE... WORKING ON A STORY ABOUT HOW ENVIRONMENTALISTS ARE DRIVING CORPORATE BUSINESS OUT OF THE CITIES.

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT. SAYING WE BEEN POLLUTIN' THE HARBOR ALL THESE YEARS.



TELL THAT TO ALL MY BOYS CAN'T PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE FOR THEIR KIDS NOW...

SO, HOW MANY MEN DO YOU HAVE HERE NOW, DURING THE CLOSING PROCEDURE?

IT'S JUST ME AND EARL, MY ASSISTANT MANAGER. ANOTHER WEEK, WE'LL BE DONE AND THEN WE'LL BE OUT OF A JOB, TOO.

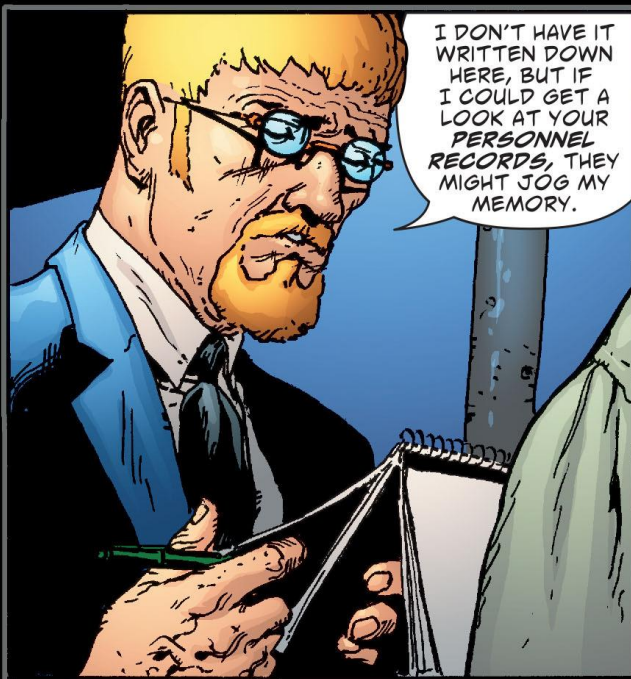
OLD MAN CLARIDGE WAS TRYIN' TO GET ANOTHER PLANT RUNNING OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS, BUT, WELL, I'M SURE YOU HEARD WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM...



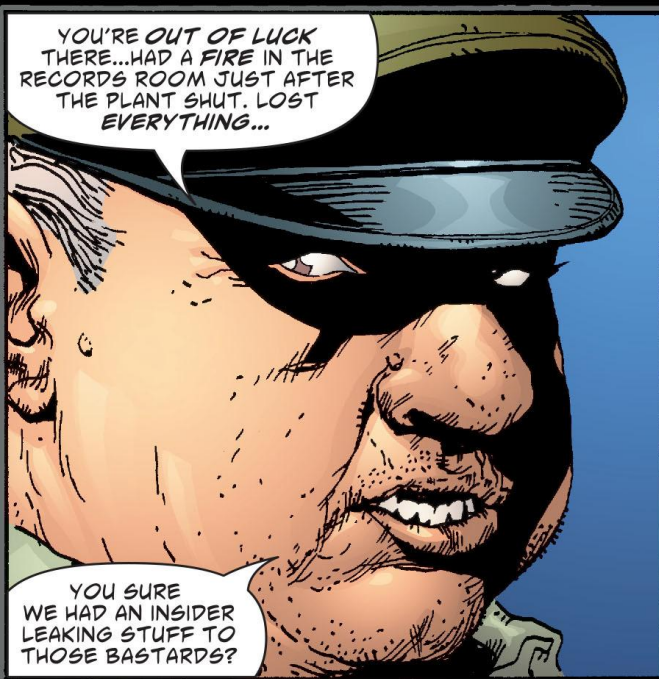
NOW, WORD IS YOU HAD A WHISTLE-BLOWER HERE.

WHAT? THAT'S THE FIRST I HEARD'A THAT...

OH YEAH, I'M CERTAIN THERE WAS A NAME LISTED ON THE REPORT I SAW...

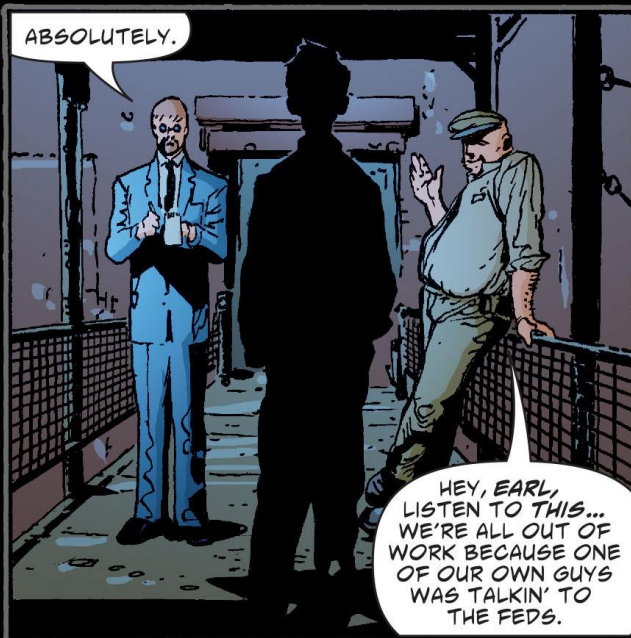


I DON'T HAVE IT WRITTEN DOWN HERE, BUT IF I COULD GET A LOOK AT YOUR PERSONNEL RECORDS, THEY MIGHT JOG MY MEMORY.



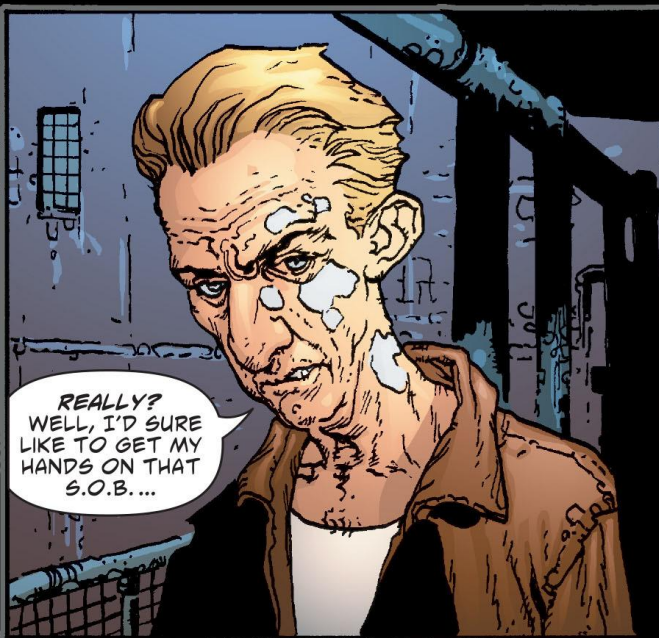
YOU'RE OUT OF LUCK THERE...HAD A FIRE IN THE RECORDS ROOM JUST AFTER THE PLANT SHUT. LOST EVERYTHING...

YOU SURE WE HAD AN INSIDER LEAKING STUFF TO THOSE BASTARDS?

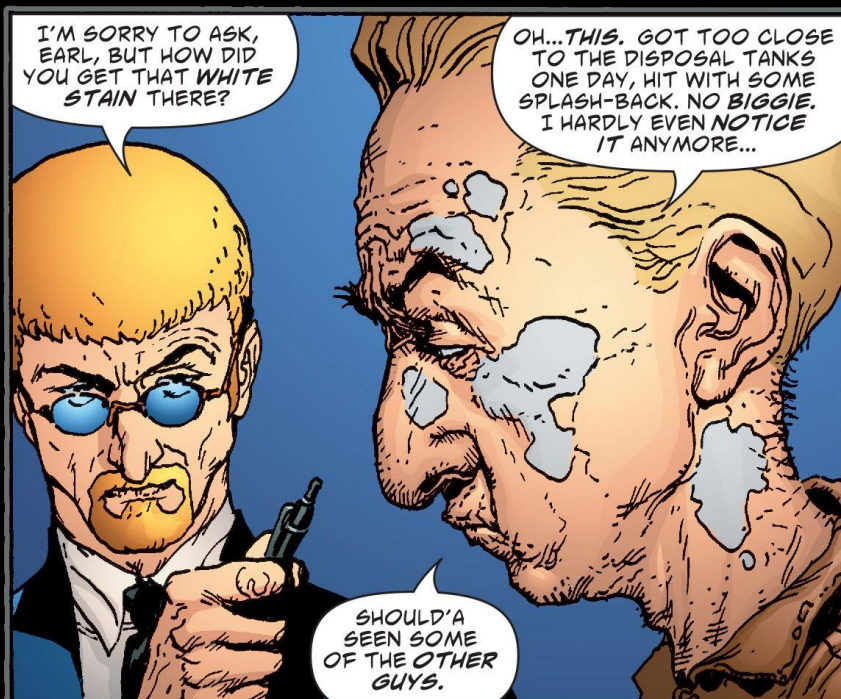


ABSOLUTELY.

HEY, EARL, LISTEN TO THIS... WE'RE ALL OUT OF WORK BECAUSE ONE OF OUR OWN GUYS WAS TALKIN' TO THE FEDS.



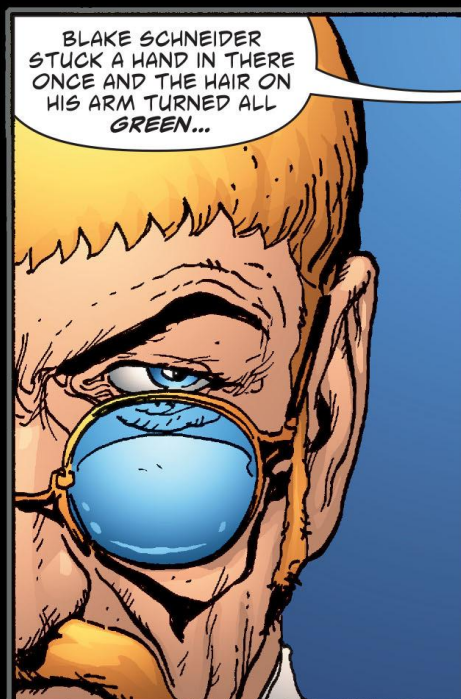
REALLY? WELL, I'D SURE LIKE TO GET MY HANDS ON THAT S.O.B....



I'M SORRY TO ASK, EARL, BUT HOW DID YOU GET THAT WHITE STAIN THERE?

OH...THIS. GOT TOO CLOSE TO THE DISPOSAL TANKS ONE DAY, HIT WITH SOME SPLASH-BACK. NO BIGGIE. I HARDLY EVEN NOTICE IT ANYMORE...

SHOULD'A SEEN SOME OF THE OTHER GUYS.



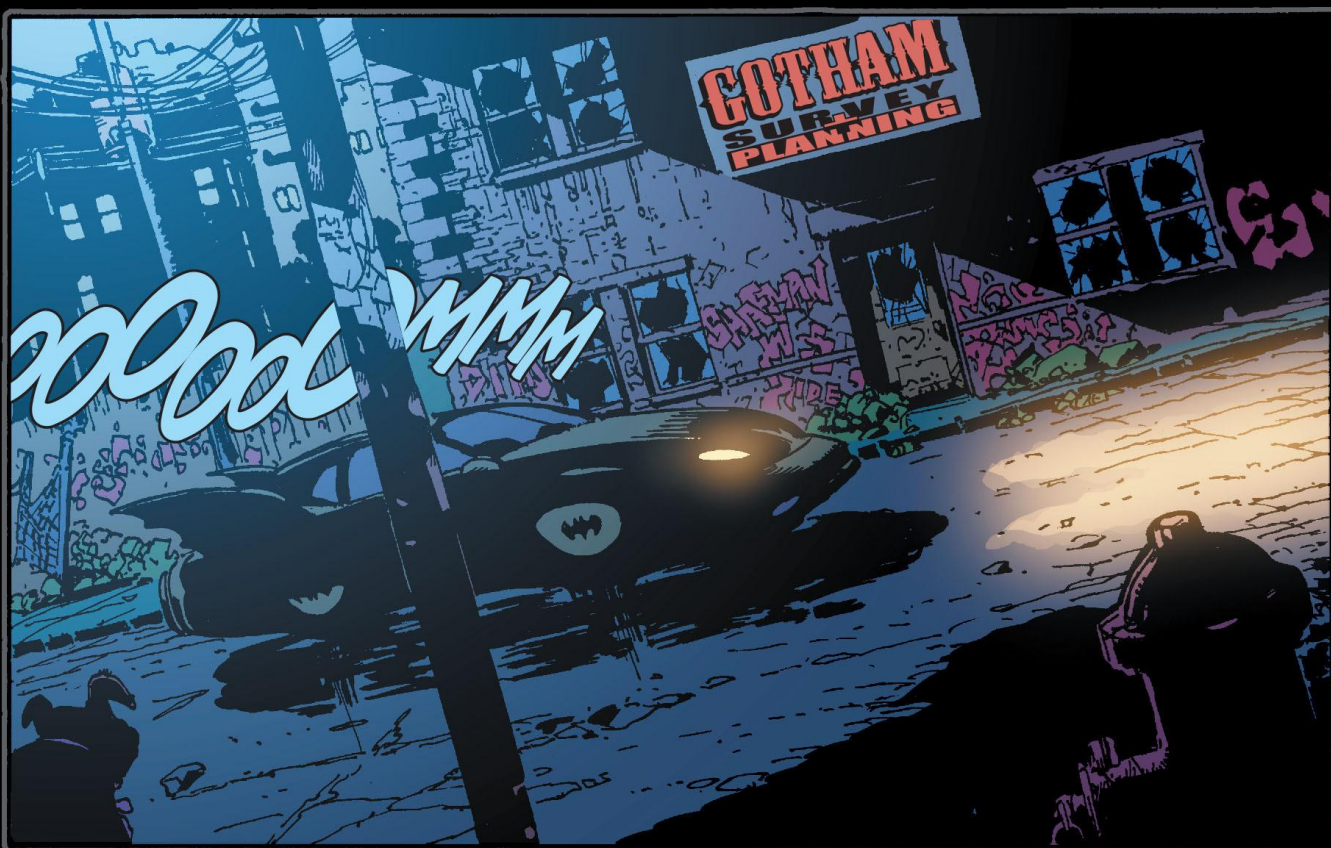
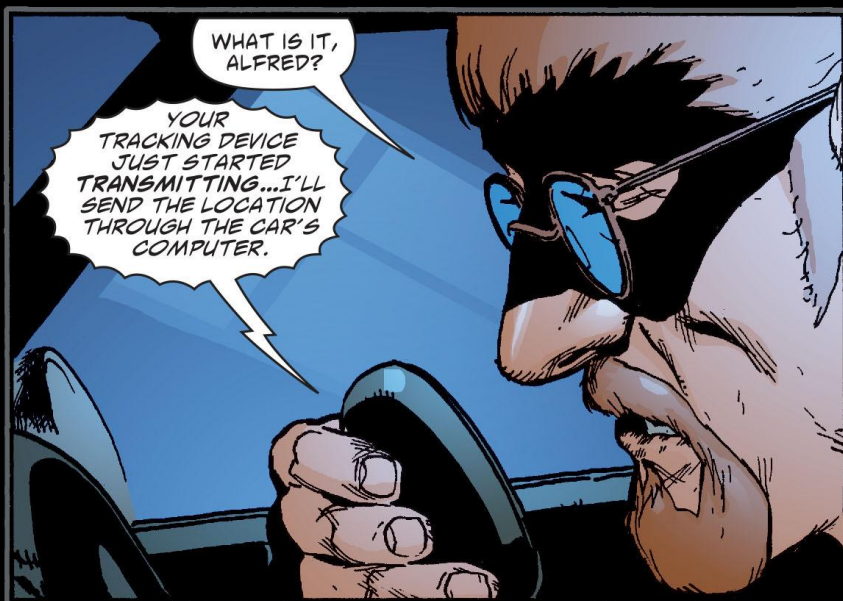
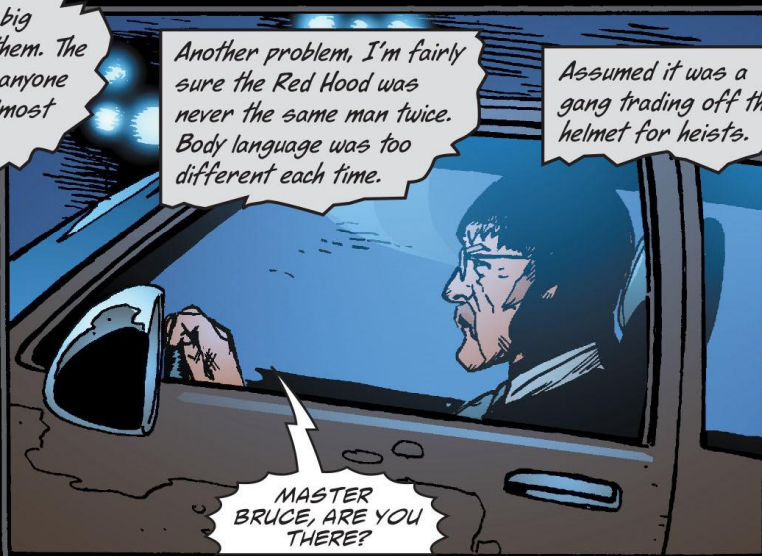
BLAKE SCHNEIDER STUCK A HAND IN THERE ONCE AND THE HAIR ON HIS ARM TURNED ALL GREEN...

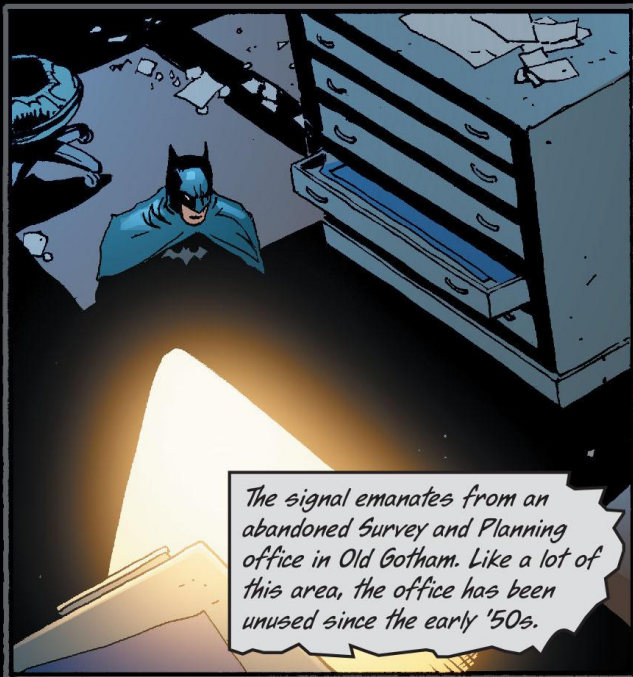
Could it be this simple?
Joker and the Red Hood
are one and the same?
One criminal mastermind
transformed into another?

Problem is, there are big
differences between them. The
Red Hood never killed anyone
and Joker kills with almost
every breath he takes.

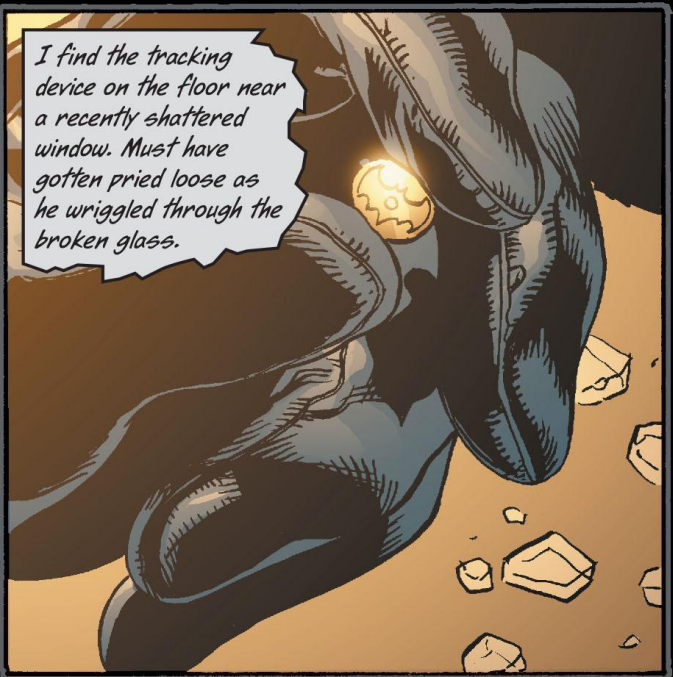
Another problem, I'm fairly
sure the Red Hood was
never the same man twice.
Body language was too
different each time.

Assumed it was a
gang trading off the
helmet for heists.

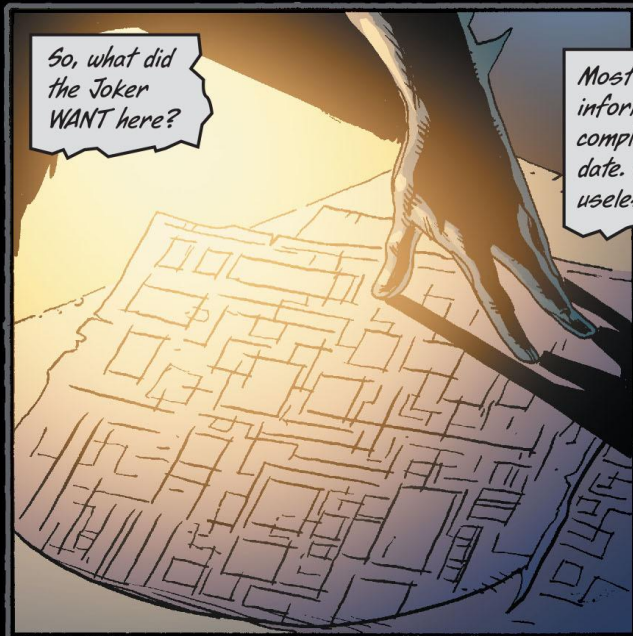




The signal emanates from an abandoned Survey and Planning office in Old Gotham. Like a lot of this area, the office has been unused since the early '50s.



I find the tracking device on the floor near a recently shattered window. Must have gotten pried loose as he wriggled through the broken glass.



So, what did the Joker WANT here?

Most of this information is completely out of date. It'd be useless.



Except for some maps.



Like the sewer system. The current network is built in conjunction with the original structure the city was built around.

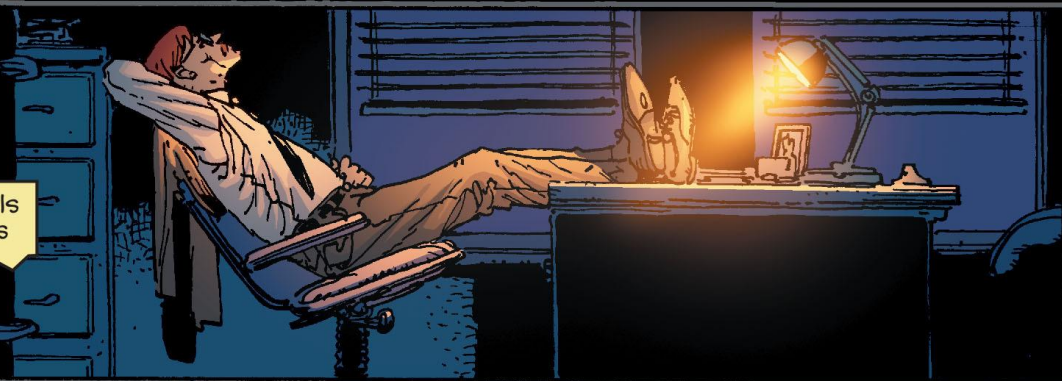
So, if someone knew what they were doing, they could get all the way from one side of Gotham to the other without ever leaving those tunnels.



I was planning to check the sewers tonight anyway.

No Joker appearance on the TV today at all.

I'm so tired it almost feels like a relief, but I know it's just a calm before the storm.



Of course, the low-level skels are taking full advantage of the situation tonight by looting everything that's not chained down.

Just another sign of a powder keg ready to blow, I suppose.

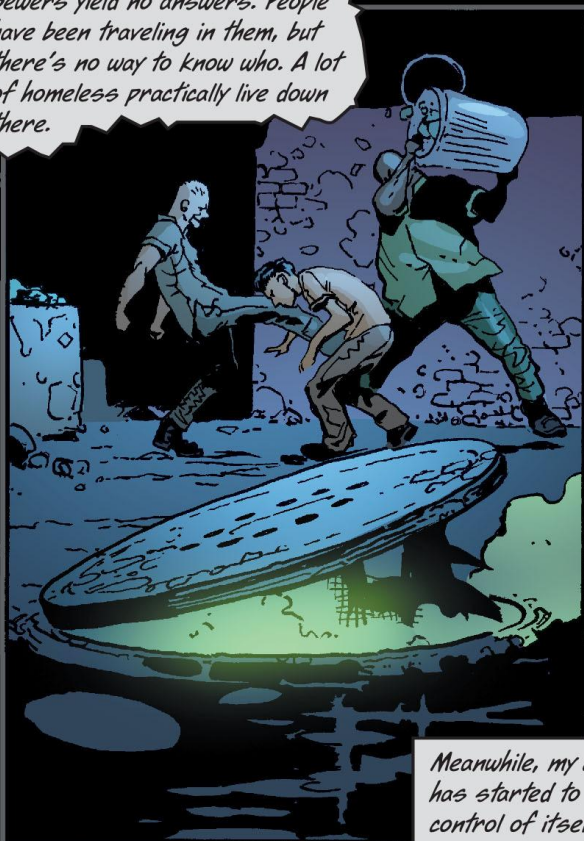


I need to see my family for more than a minute at a time.



God, I hope this is over soon. I need to sleep a whole night through again someday.

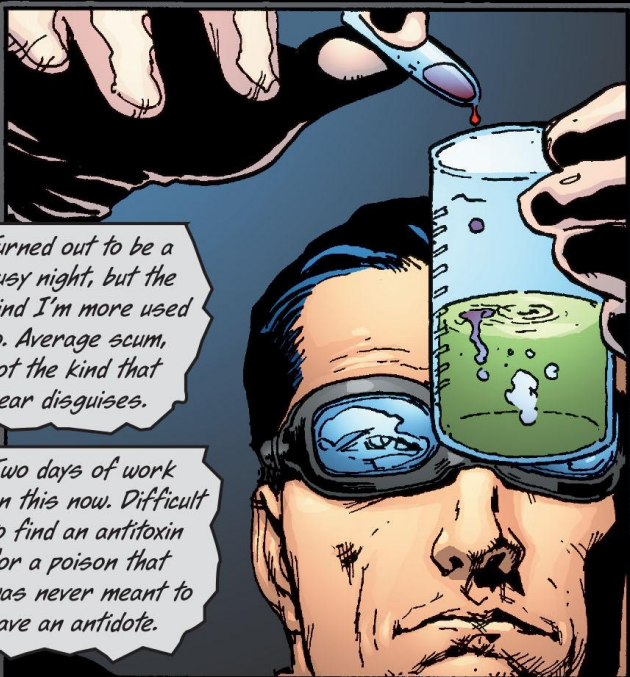
Sewers yield no answers. People have been traveling in them, but there's no way to know who. A lot of homeless practically live down there.



Meanwhile, my city has started to lose control of itself.



At least I can do something about THAT.



Turned out to be a busy night, but the kind I'm more used to. Average scum, not the kind that wear disguises.

Two days of work on this now. Difficult to find an antitoxin for a poison that was never meant to have an antidote.



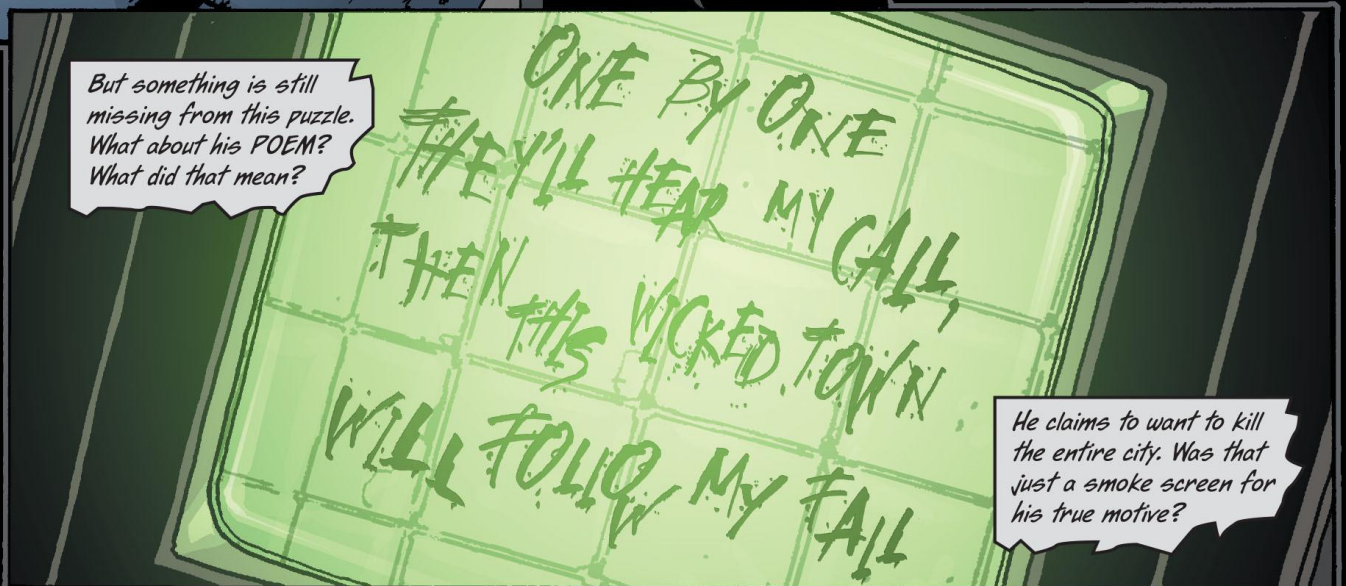
The question is, will I need it?



If I'm right, and Joker is the Red Hood, then his vengeance may already be complete.



And if his plunge into chemical waste did DISFIGURE him, then revenge would be a typically paranoid response. Blaming others for his own actions.



But something is still missing from this puzzle. What about his POEM? What did that mean?

ONE BY ONE
THEY'LL HEAR MY CALL,
THEN THIS WICKED TOWN
WILL FOLLOW MY FALL

He claims to want to kill the entire city. Was that just a smoke screen for his true motive?



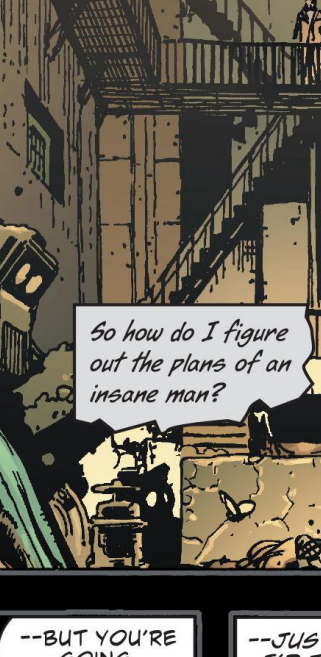
Hard to believe anyone would kill so many people just to hide a motive, but we're obviously not dealing with a rational mind.

So how do I figure out the plans of an insane man?



I never prepared for this. I planned for the killers, the muggers, the rapists. Desperate people doing desperate things.

But I never imagined something like the Joker.



MASTER BRUCE, I HATE TO INTERRUPT YOUR THOUGHTS--

--BUT YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO SEE THIS...



--JUST BECAUSE I'D TAKEN ONE DAY OFF YOU WERE RID OF ME YET, DID YOU?



AND TONIGHT, YOUR DEAR OLD JOKER'S GOT SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL PLANNED...

THE RICH AND POWERFUL HAVE LORDED IT OVER US LITTLE PEOPLE FOR TOO DAMN LONG... TONIGHT IT'S THEIR TURN TO SUFFER!



SO, THIS IS WHAT I LIKE TO CALL A TWO-FER. AT MIDNIGHT I'M GOING TO DO AWAY WITH BOTH JUDGE THOMAS LAKE...



...AND GOTHAM'S FAVORITE SOCIALITE BACHELOR, BRUCE WAYNE...

I pretend I've just woken up and know nothing about Joker's announcement when the police call. Then I act stunned and terrified.

In reality, though, I'm just confused. Why is Bruce Wayne a target?

Unless Joker really is just picking random names out of the social register.

Which could mean my assumptions about him are wrong, and the link I found is worthless.

--REALLY WISH YOU'D TAKE THIS, WAYNE. IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE...

I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERN, DETECTIVE ROUSSOS...

...BUT IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, I'VE GOT MY OWN TEAM OF PHYSICIANS STANDING BY...

SO, I'M SURE I'LL BE FINE.

AND WHAT EXACTLY ARE THESE DOCTORS GOING TO DO IF YOU START LAUGHING AND TURNING WHITE AS A SHEET?

THEY'LL ADMINISTER A SHOT TO SLOW HIS HEARTBEAT, STOPPING THE SPREAD OF THE POISON. THEN WE'LL GET HIM TO THE HOSPITAL.

OKAY, AND WHAT IF THE JOKER KILLS THE DOCTORS FIRST?

HMMMM... GOOD POINT, I THINK I WILL TAKE THAT MASK AFTER ALL, DETECTIVE...

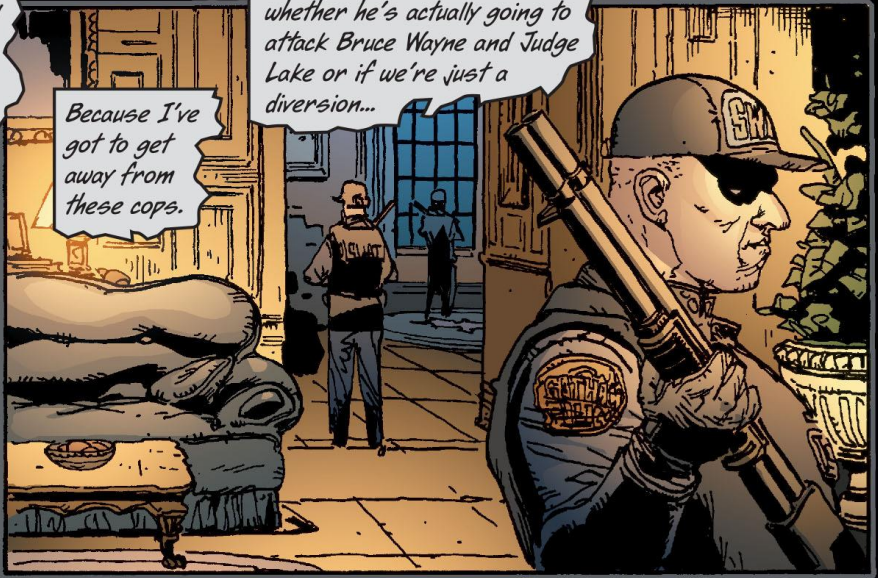
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT.

Lucky that Captain Gordon is with the team protecting the Judge tonight.

What I have planned might not work around someone as sharp as Gordon.

Because I've got to get away from these cops.

Whatever Joker is up to, whether he's actually going to attack Bruce Wayne and Judge Lake or if we're just a diversion...



...Batman has to be free to act.

And there's only one way I can make that happen...



YEAH, ALL CLEAR OVER HERE. WAYNE'S FINE, EXCEPT FOR THE USUAL RICH GUY B.S....



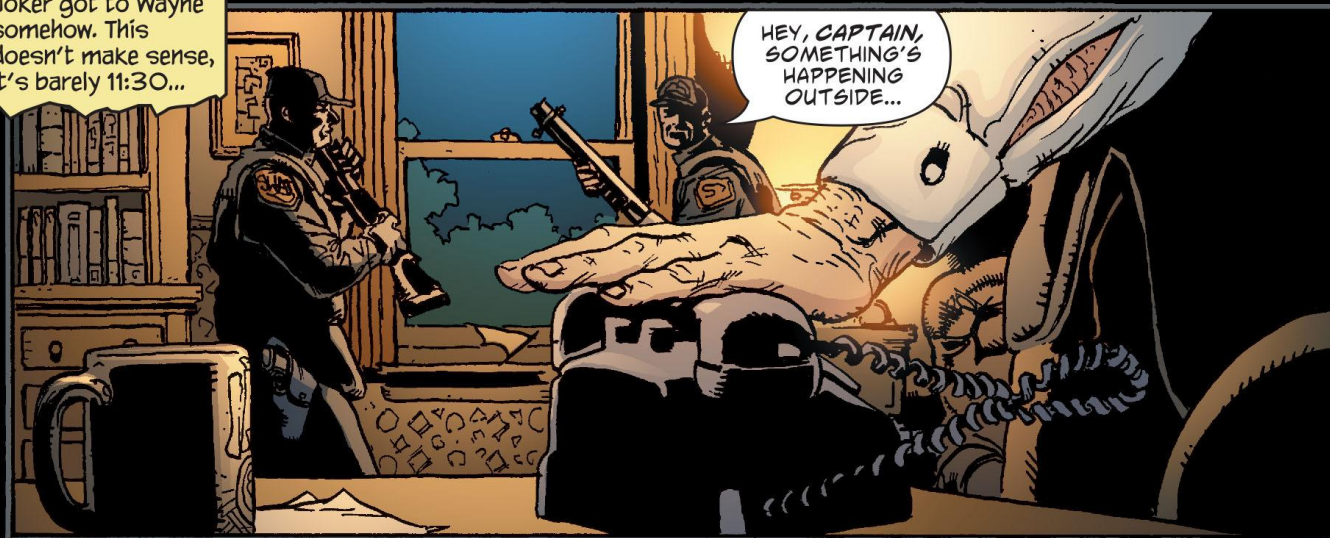
Heh heh heh...

UH, HOLD ON, CAPTAIN... WE MAY HAVE A PROBLEM...



HAHA
HAHAHA
HAHA!

Joker got to Wayne somehow. This doesn't make sense, it's barely 11:30...



HEY, CAPTAIN, SOMETHING'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE...



WHAT? WHAT IS IT?



TATA TATA TATA

Oh God, he's hitting both fronts early... This isn't RIGHT.

What the hell is going on?



KROOOOON

BRATAATATATATATATATAT



DOWN!
GET
DOWN!

SOMEBODY
COVER JUDGE
LAKE!

THIS
IS GORDON,
WE'RE UNDER
ATTACK. REPEAT,
WE ARE UNDER
ATTACK!



KEEP HIM
STILL! WE
HAVE TO
ADMINISTER THE
INJECTION!

HAHAHAHAHA!

I'M
TRYING...
HE'S
STRONG...

HA
HAHAHA
HAHA!

Losing control--
not what--
expected--fool--





COME ON,
BRUCE...THERE'S
NOTHING TO BE
AFRAID OF...

DON'T BE
A BIG BABY,
DARLING...

No--wait--
don't go--
that way--

IS THIS THE
KIND OF MAN
I RAISED? AFRAID
TO WALK DOWN
AN ALLEY AT
NIGHT?

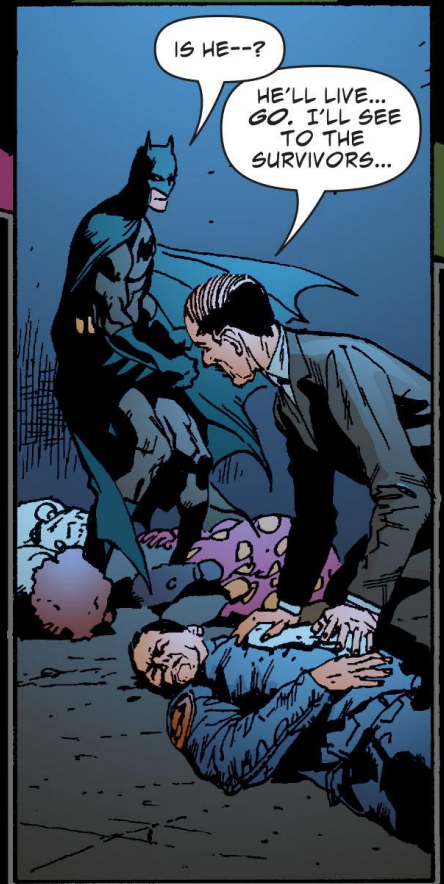
I TOLD
YOU, THERE'S
NO NEED TO BE
FRIGHTENED...

BANG
BANG

No--you can't--
Just like--all
the rest--

Killers--rapists--
liars-- idiots--
cowards--





No time to get to the Manor for my car. This'll have to do...



GORDON,
COME IN...



GORDON
HERE, WHO
IS THIS?

WHO
DO YOU
THINK?

YOU? WHERE THE
HELL WERE YOU?
I JUST SPENT THE
LAST TEN MINUTES UNDER
HEAVY FIRE HERE, AND
WAYNE IS DEAD, TOO.
WE BLEW IT...



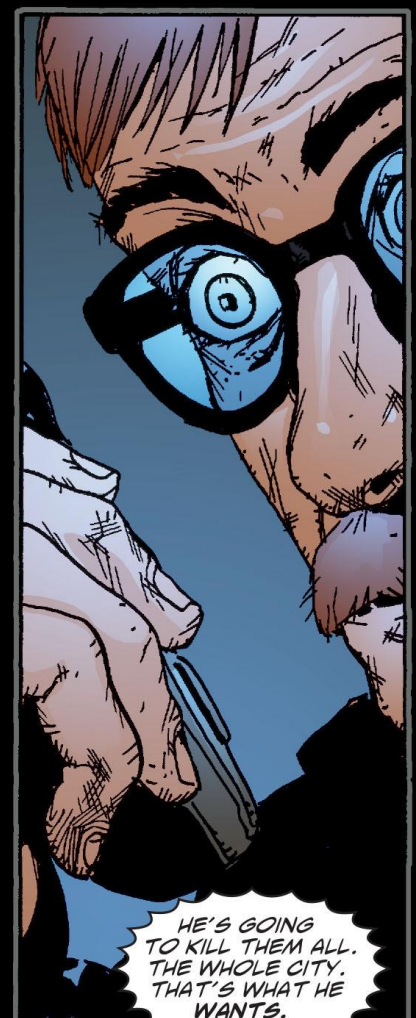
WAYNE *ISN'T* DEAD,
HE'S ON HIS WAY TO
THE HOSPITAL. BUT HIS
AMBULANCE GOT ATTACKED.
THERE WERE SOME
CASUALTIES.

WHAT?
HOW DO
YOU--

LISTEN TO ME.
YOU NEED TO CALL
THE RESERVOIR AND
HAVE THEM CUT OFF
THE WATER TO THE
CITY, NOW.



WHY?



HE'S GOING
TO KILL THEM ALL.
THE WHOLE CITY.
THAT'S WHAT HE
WANTS.



HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS?

BECAUSE YESTERDAY HE WAS LOOKING AT MAPS OF THE OLD RESERVOIR BYPASS SYSTEM. I JUST DIDN'T GET IT THEN.



YOU HAVE TO TELL THEM TO SHUT OFF THE WATER. HE GOING TO USE THE BYPASS TO PUMP IN POISON FROM THE OLD RESERVOIR.

ALL RIGHT...



BRRNNGG
BBRNNGG
BBRRNNGG



THERE'S NO ANSWER.

DAMN IT. I'LL HAVE TO DO THIS THE HARD WAY...



BOOM

I'm a minute away, but it takes me five to get there...Gordon's people will be here soon, but it'll all be over by then.

I was right about Joker's motives, I just didn't understand the full nature of his desires. His poem explained it perfectly, though...

He'd get personal revenge on the people who made him what he is. And then the whole city would "follow his fall."

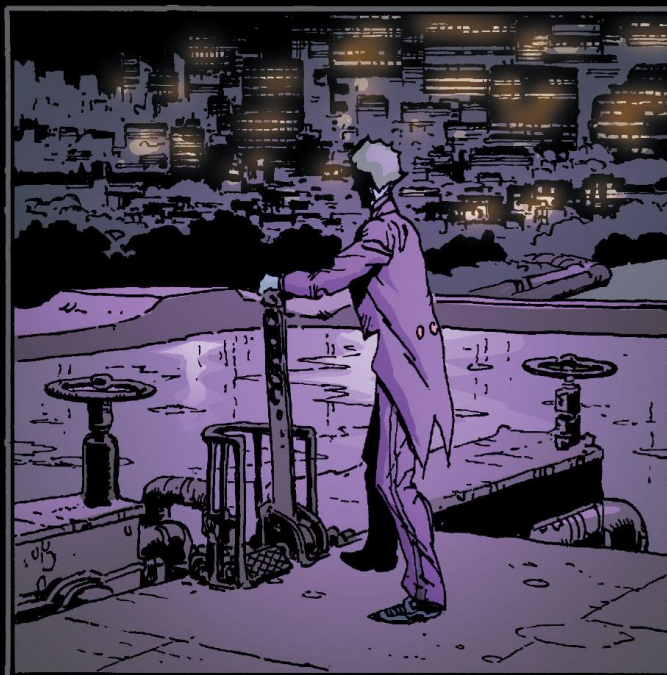
His fall was into a vat of toxic poison that spilled out into what should have been a clean bay.

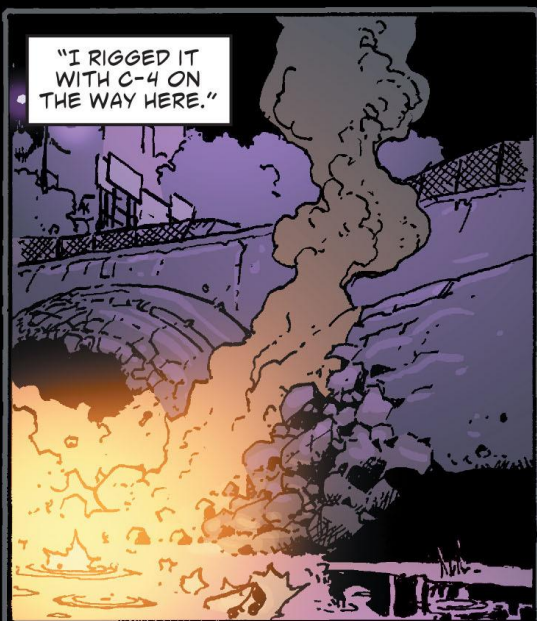
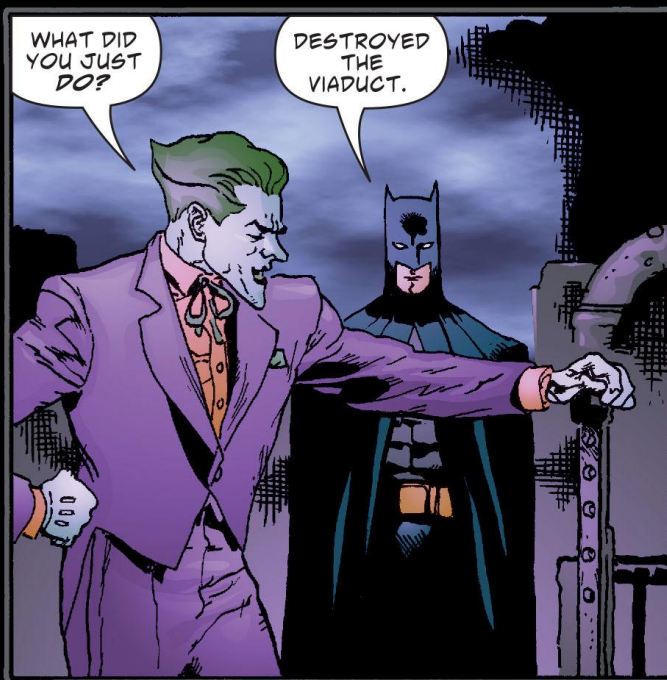
So he poisons Gotham's water supply, and everyone dies laughing.

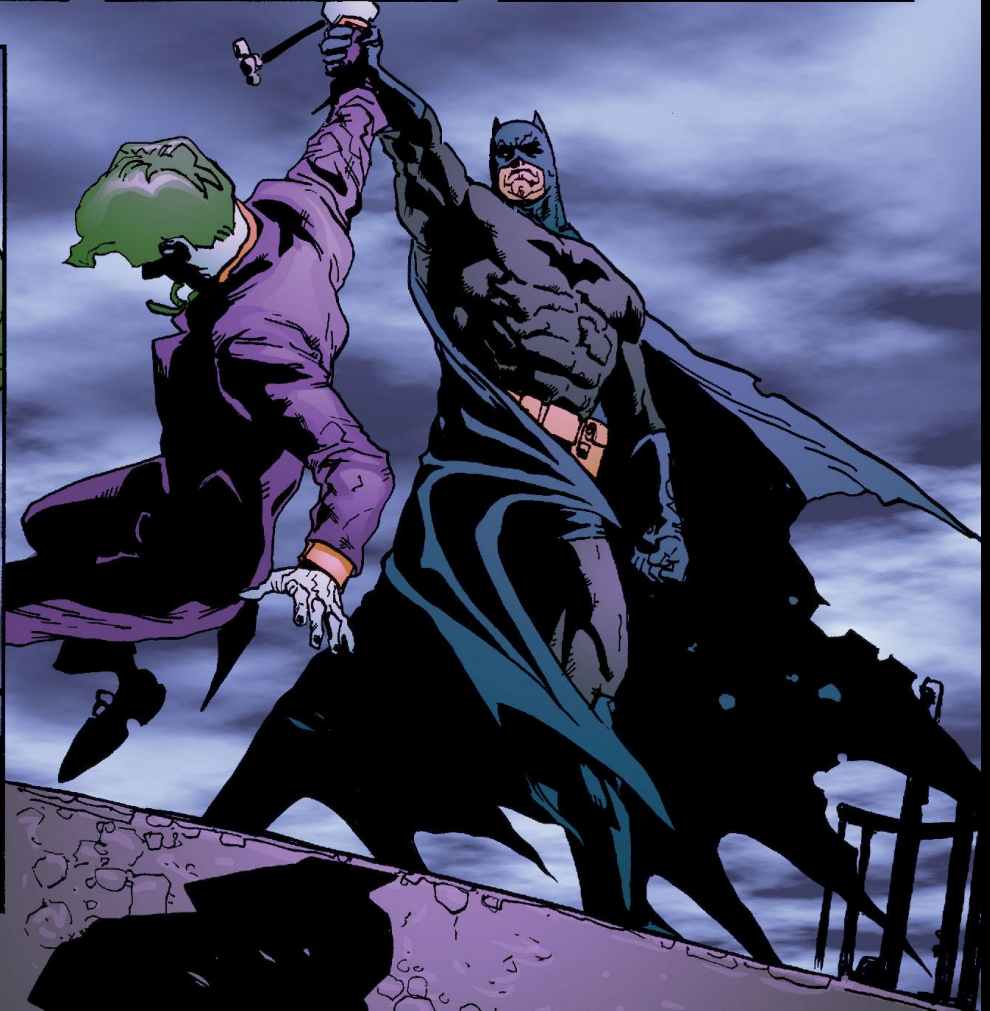
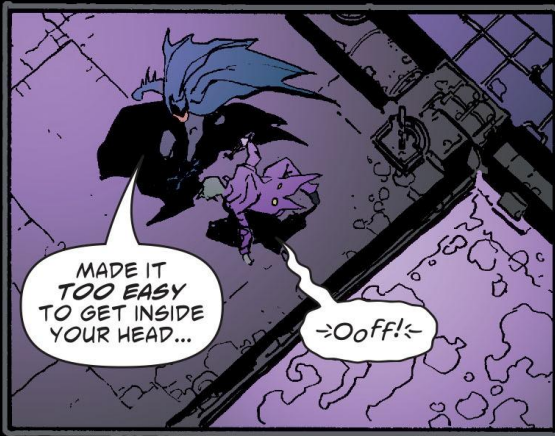
In his sick mind, we're all to blame just for being alive.

I understand that now. That paranoid anger and hate.

He may be a genius, but that hate is all he knows.

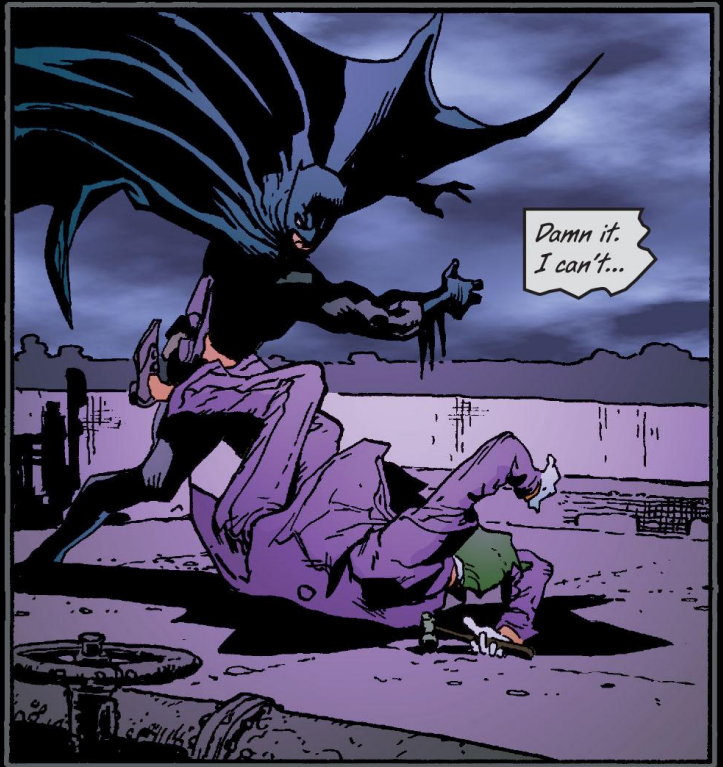








I can't.



Damn it.
I can't...



I'M DISAPPOINTED,
BATS...heh heh...

THOUGHT YOU
WERE GOING TO
FINISH WHAT YOU
STARTED...

WHO
SAYS I'M
DONE?



I SAY--



This'll have
to do.



...OKAY,
UNCLE...YOU
WIN...



NO, YOU
WON'T.

It takes the city a few weeks to calm back down even after Joker is locked safely away in Arkham. I can hardly blame them.

His prints aren't in any database, so we'll probably never know who he really is. He's certainly not saying, if he even knows.

Wayne was so glad to survive his part in all this that his company rebuilt the Gotham viaduct at no charge.

People were sweaty and miserable for a week, and by the end of it water was going for ten bucks a bottle, but we survived.

SO...HOW ARE YOU DOING?

I'VE BEEN BETTER.

STILL BLAMING YOURSELF FOR ALL THOSE DEAD PEOPLE?

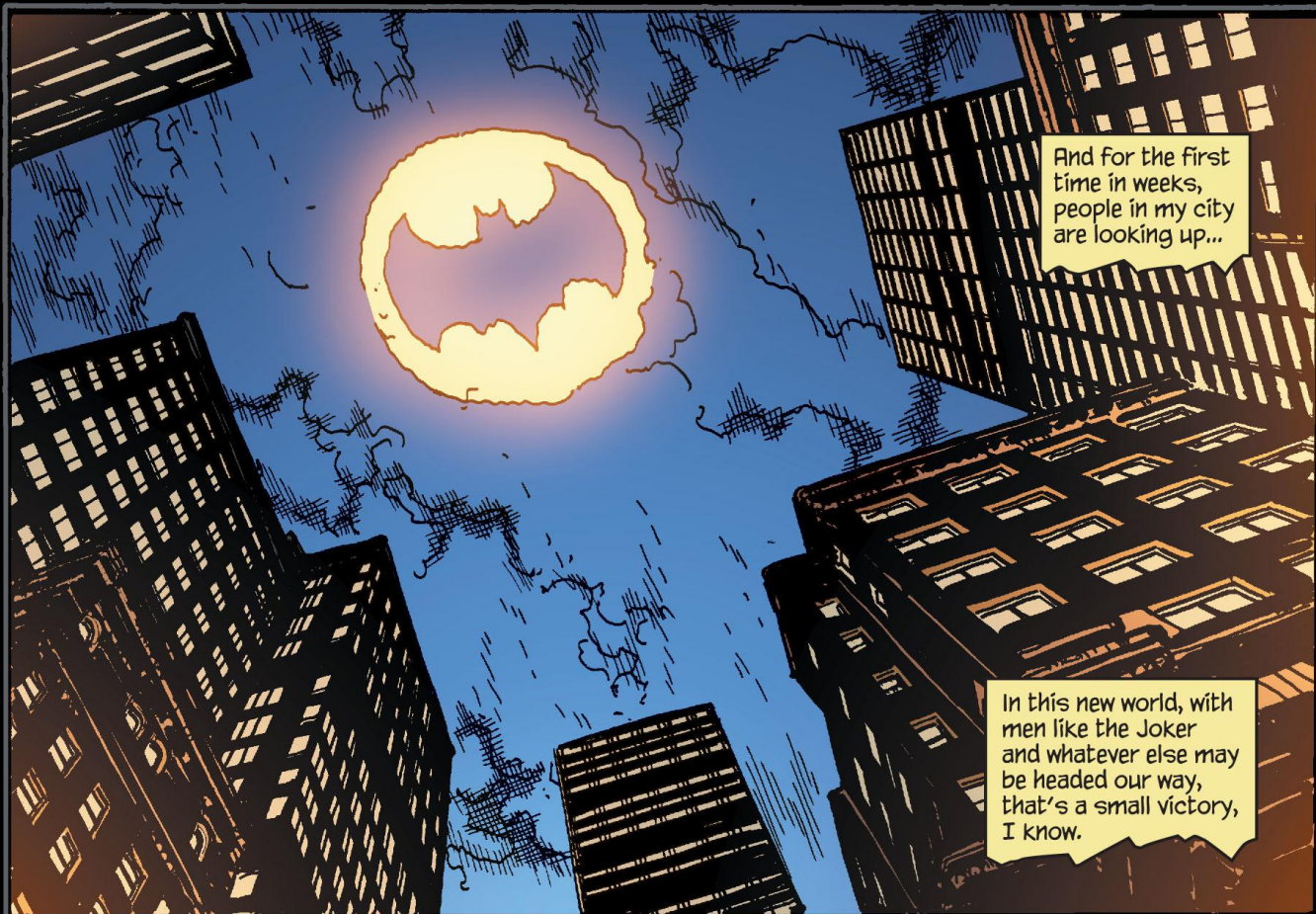
MAYBE. IF JOKER WAS THE RED HOOD, THEN I DID PLAY A HAND IN HIS CREATION...

DID YOU PUT THE HOOD ON HIS HEAD AND THE GUN IN HIS HAND? NO, YOU DIDN'T.

YOU SAVED THE ENTIRE CITY FROM THAT DERANGED MADMAN. GIVE YOURSELF A PAT ON THE BACK, I SAY.

I'LL TAKE IT UNDER ADVISEMENT.

YOU DO THAT.



MADE OF WOOD

Pencils by Patrick Zircher

Inks by Aaron Sowd (Parts 1-3) and Steve Bird (Part 3)

Color by Jason Wright

Lettering by Todd Klein

Cover art by Tim Sale





TSALÉ
2003

GOTHAM CITY,
6:12 A.M....



THERE'S A
MOMENT--

--RIGHT BEFORE
MY GRAPPLE CABLE
GOES TAUT...

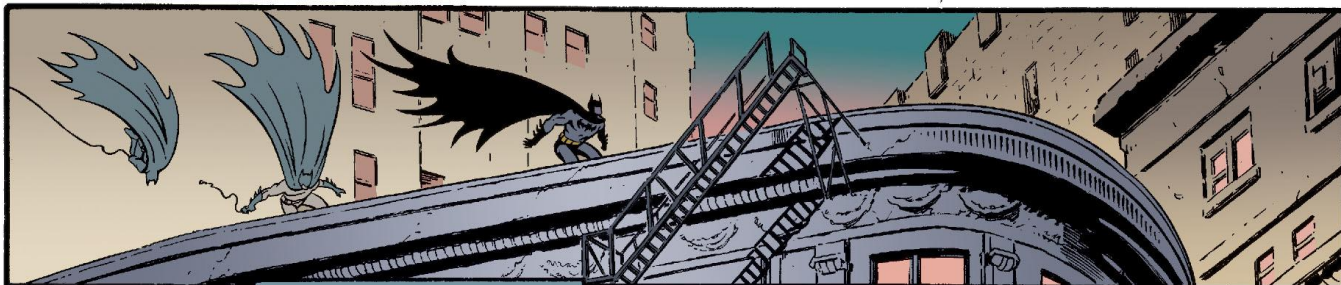
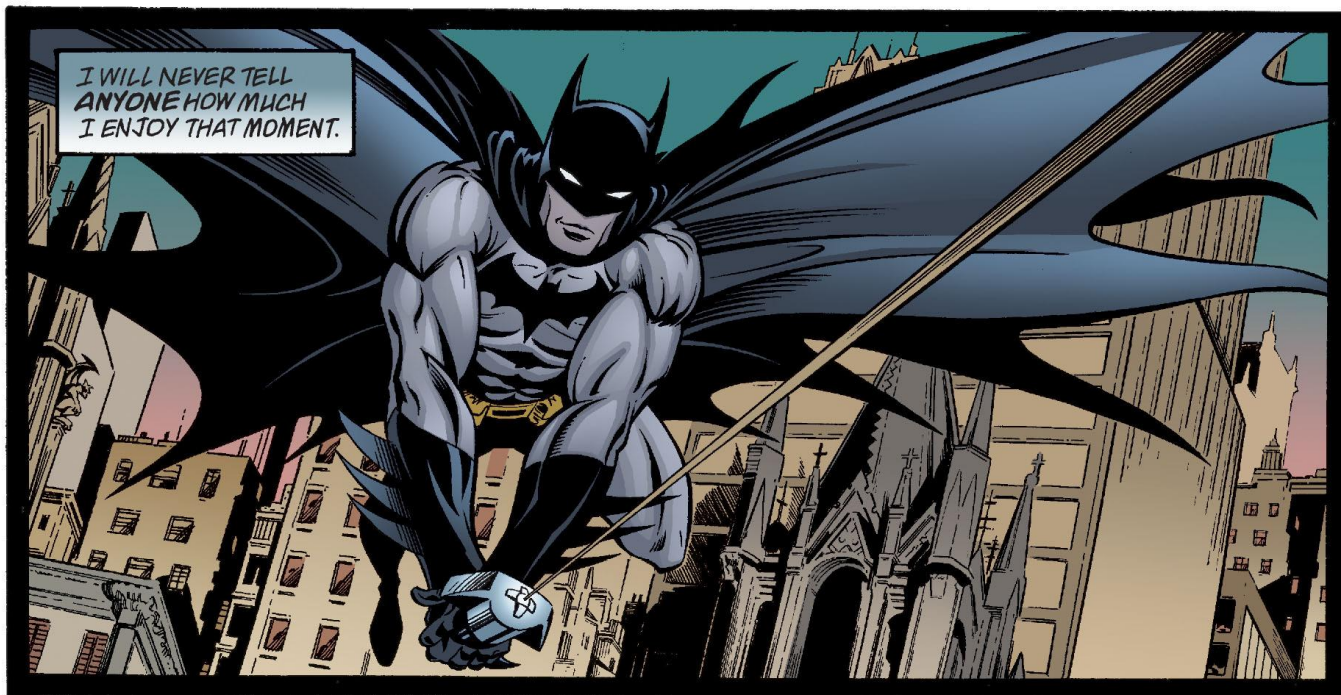


...WHEN IT'S JUST
ME AND THE GROUND
HOVERING SOME-
WHERE FAR BELOW...

...A MOMENT
OF FREEFALL...



...A MOMENT
OF TOTAL CALM.

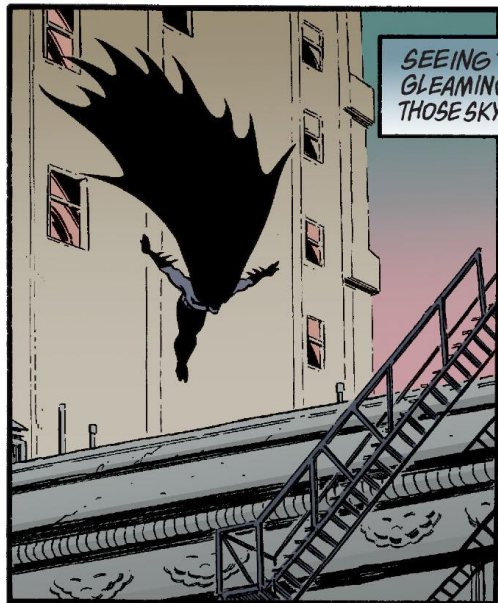


IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW DAY, IT ALMOST FEELS LIKE GOTHAM IS LIFTING ITSELF OUT OF THE MIRE...



FEELS LIKE ALL MY WORK, ALL MY SACRIFICE, IS WORTHWHILE.

SEEING THE SUN GLEAMING OFF THOSE SKYSCRAPERS--



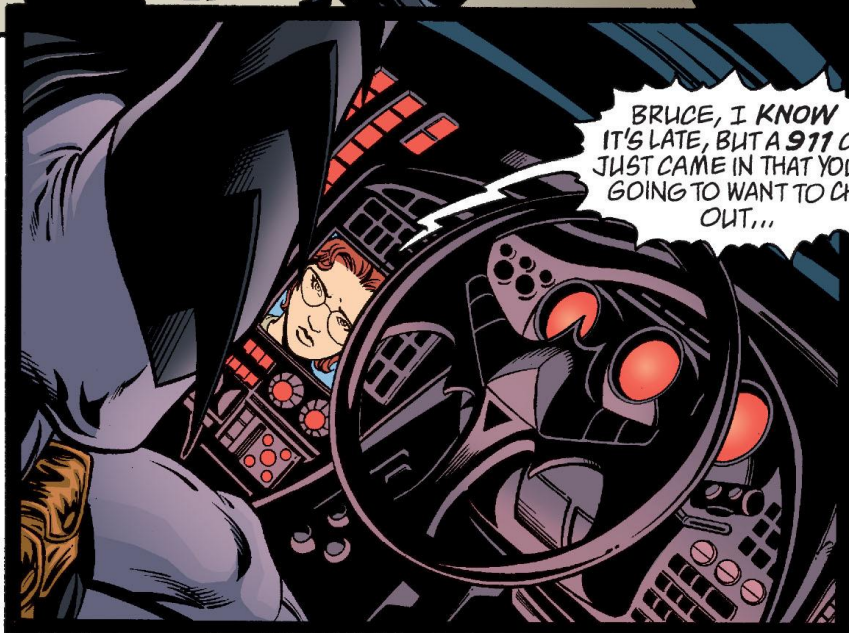
-- GIVES ME SOMETHING I NEED TO GO ON EACH NIGHT.



SECURITY DEACTIVATED.

HELPS ME CARRY ON MY MISSION.

BRUCE, I KNOW IT'S LATE, BUT A 911 CALL JUST CAME IN THAT YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO CHECK OUT...



AN HOUR
EARLIER...

Not a cop anymore,
and here I am still,
with my early
morning routine...

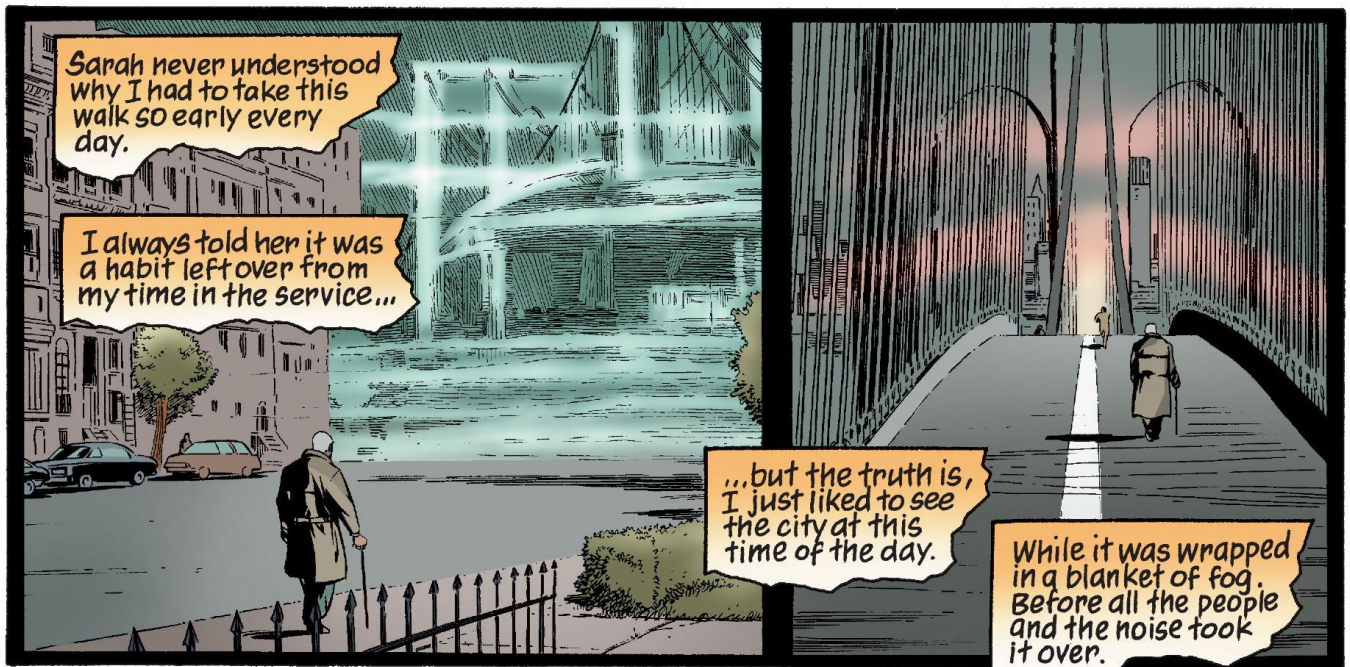
Good to be
doing Tai Chi
again, though,
after all these
years.

Does my back
more good than
all those physical
therapists put
together.

Not that it's
got me off
this cane.

I'm beginning to think
I may have to walk with
this damn thing for the
rest of my life.

All things considered, I
guess I can live with it.



Sarah never understood why I had to take this walk so early every day.

I always told her it was a habit left over from my time in the service...

...but the truth is, I just liked to see the city at this time of the day.

While it was wrapped in a blanket of fog. Before all the people and the noise took it over.



Until then, these were my streets.

TAKE 'ER EASY, COMMISH...

ALWAYS TRY TO, MICK...



Of course, I'll never get Mickey to stop calling me that.

Hell, it's a full-time job just trying not to think of myself as a cop, I can hardly expect more from anyone else.



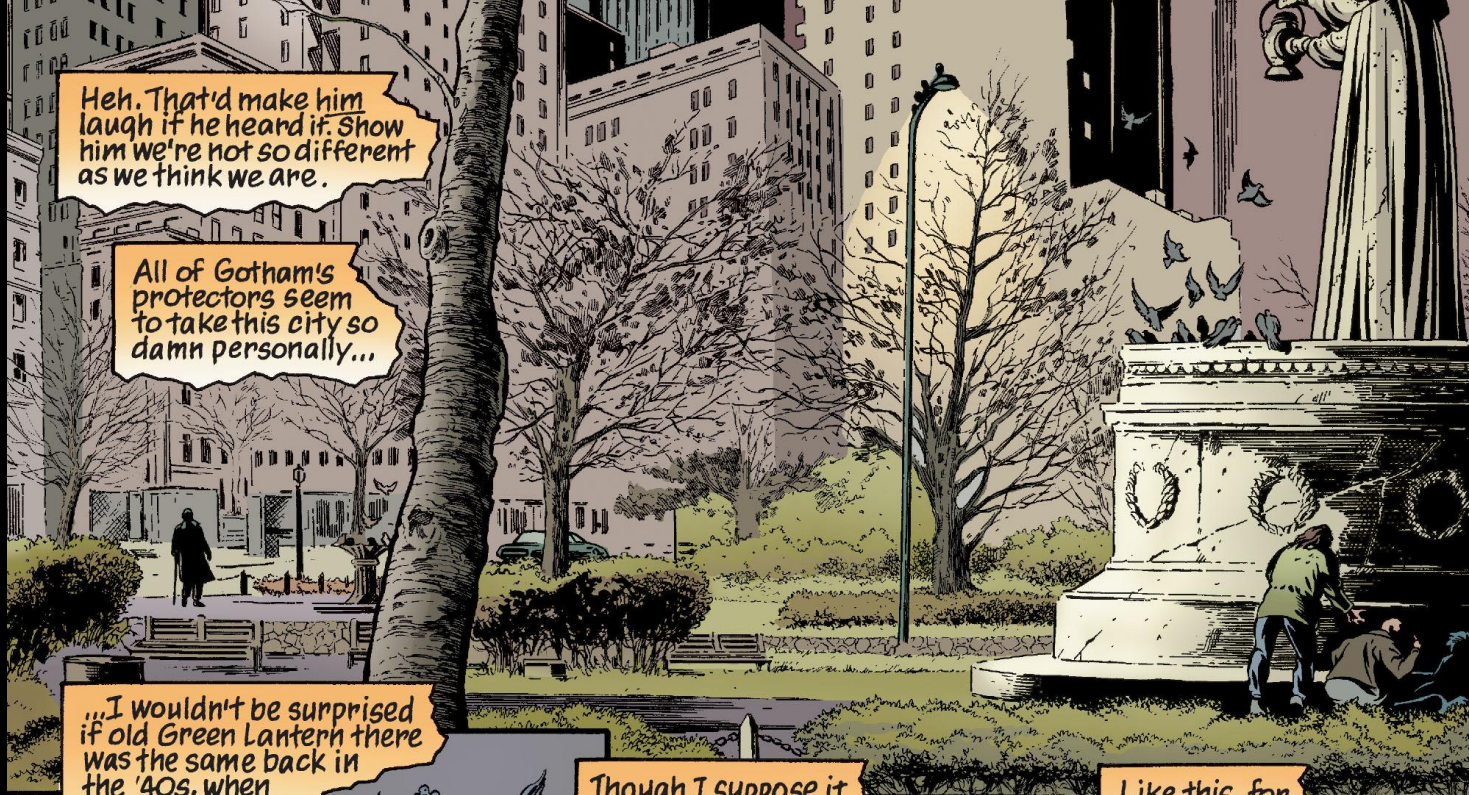
It must be being back in Gotham. In Europe, it was easier to forget about my life before.

Which I guess explains why I came back...



...because I don't want to forget, or run away. This is where my life has been...

...this is my city.



Heh. That'd make him laugh if he heard it. Show him we're not so different as we think we are.

All of Gotham's protectors seem to take this city so damn personally...

...I wouldn't be surprised if old Green Lantern there was the same back in the '40s, when Gotham was his turf.

Though I suppose it must've been a lot easier in his day.

Crime was simpler then, and people valued life a bit more...

Like this, for example...

Rolling a drunk right across the street from the courthouse. That's just rude.



HEY, YOU TWO!

GET AWAY FROM THERE!



BACK OFF, GIMPO!

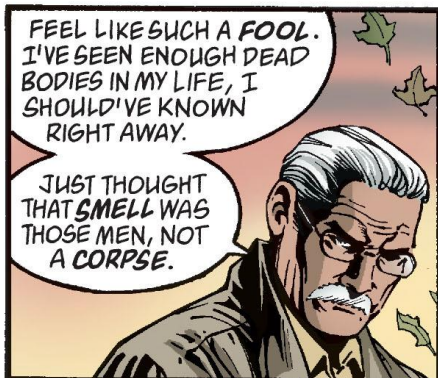
DON'T MAKE ME CUT YOU...





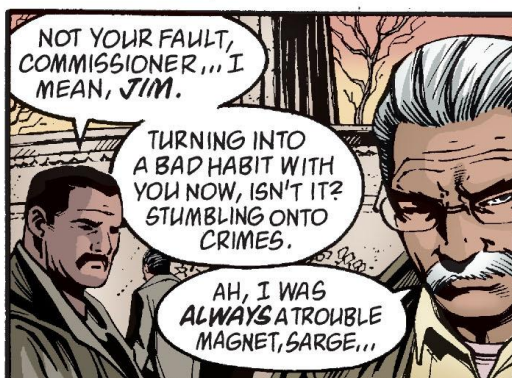
-- SO, YOU'VE GOT NO IDEA WHERE THESE SKEL TOOK OFF TO ?

NO. I GAVE PURSUIT, SARGE, BUT, YOU KNOW, WITH THIS CANE AND ALL, I'M JUST NOT MUCH GOOD FOR RUNNING.



FEEL LIKE SUCH A FOOL. I'VE SEEN ENOUGH DEAD BODIES IN MY LIFE, I SHOULD'VE KNOWN RIGHT AWAY.

JUST THOUGHT THAT SMELL WAS THOSE MEN, NOT A CORPSE.



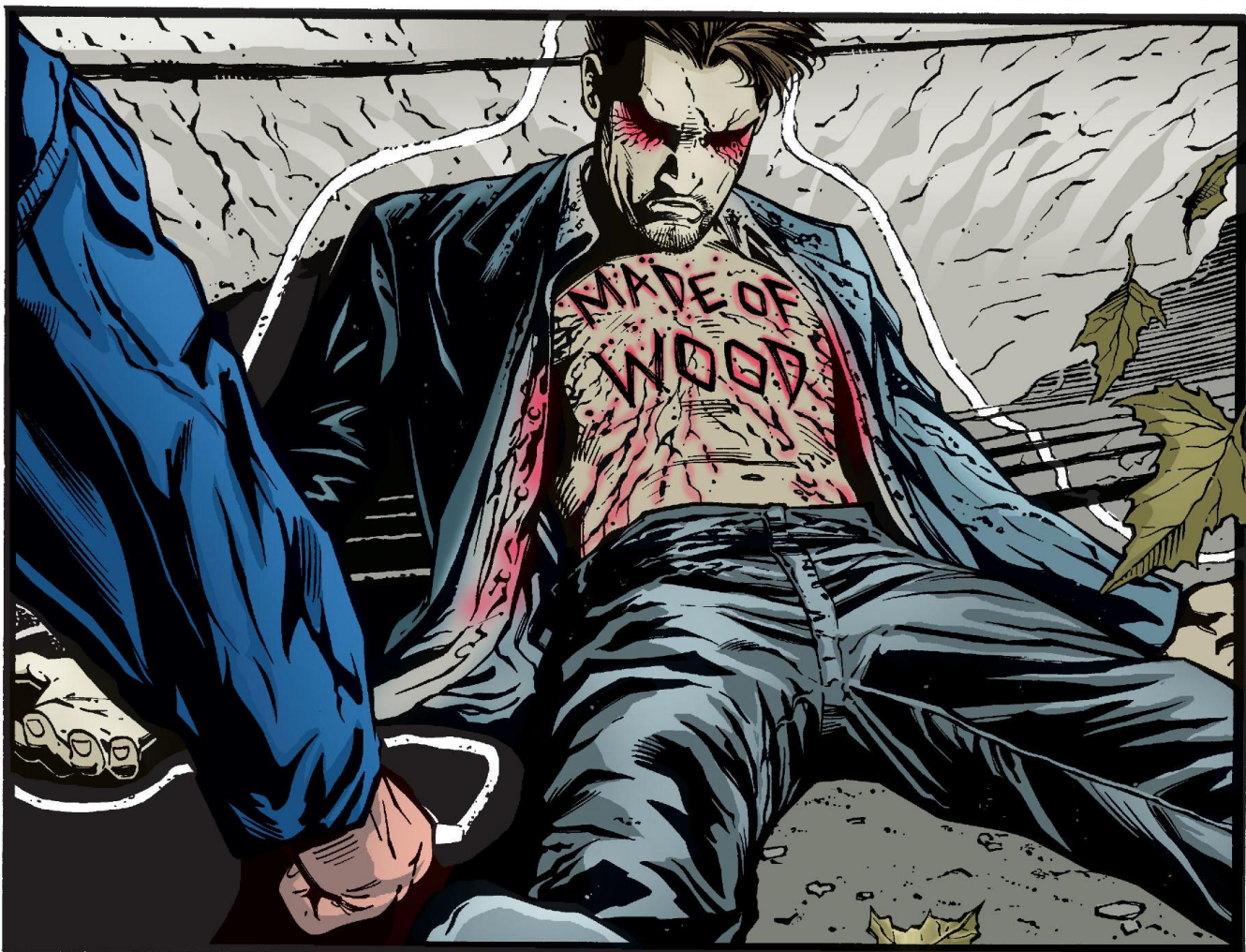
NOT YOUR FAULT, COMMISSIONER, I MEAN, JIM.

TURNING INTO A BAD HABIT WITH YOU NOW, ISN'T IT? STUMBLING ONTO CRIMES.

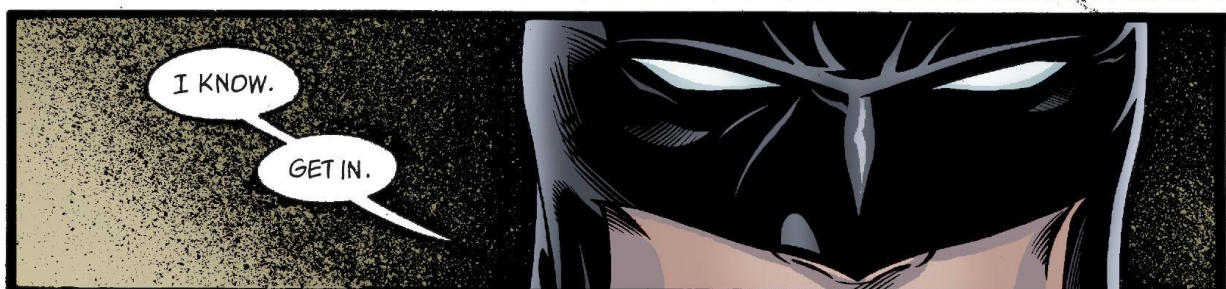
AH, I WAS ALWAYS A TROUBLE MAGNET, SARGE,

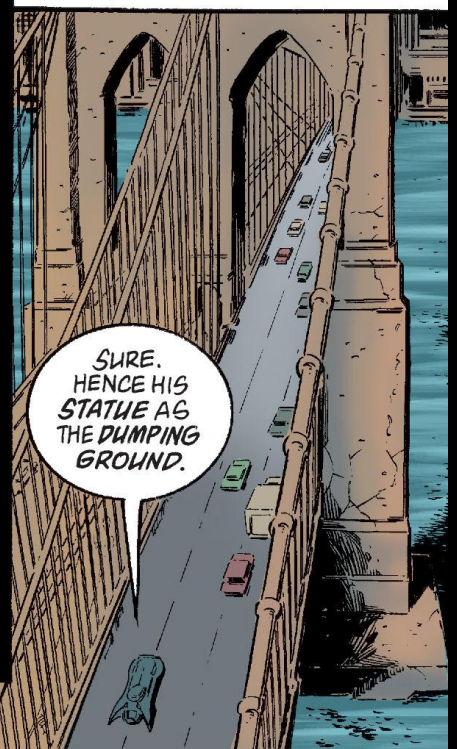
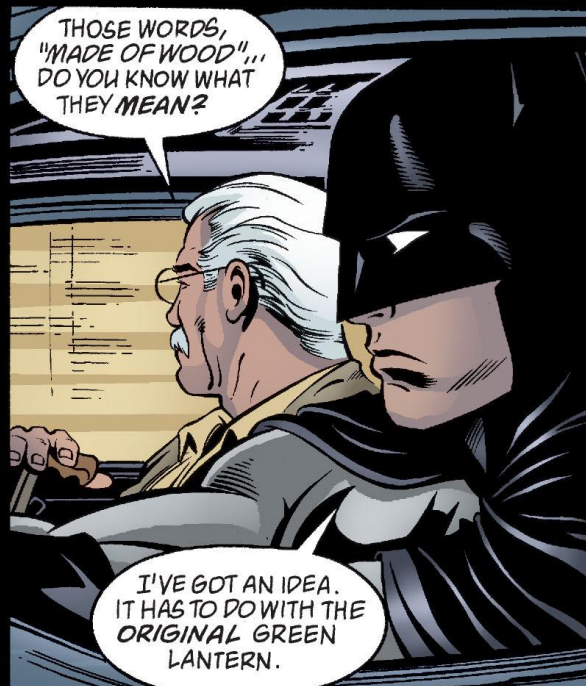
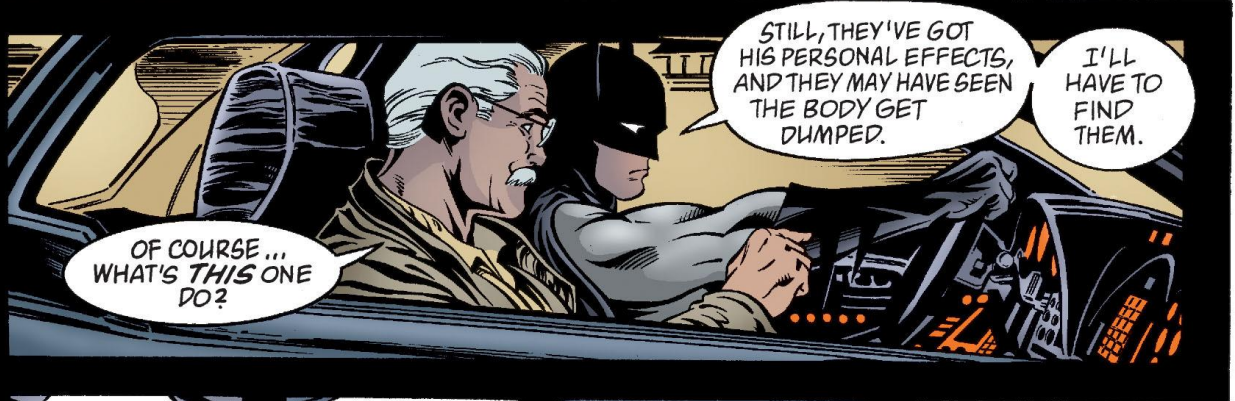
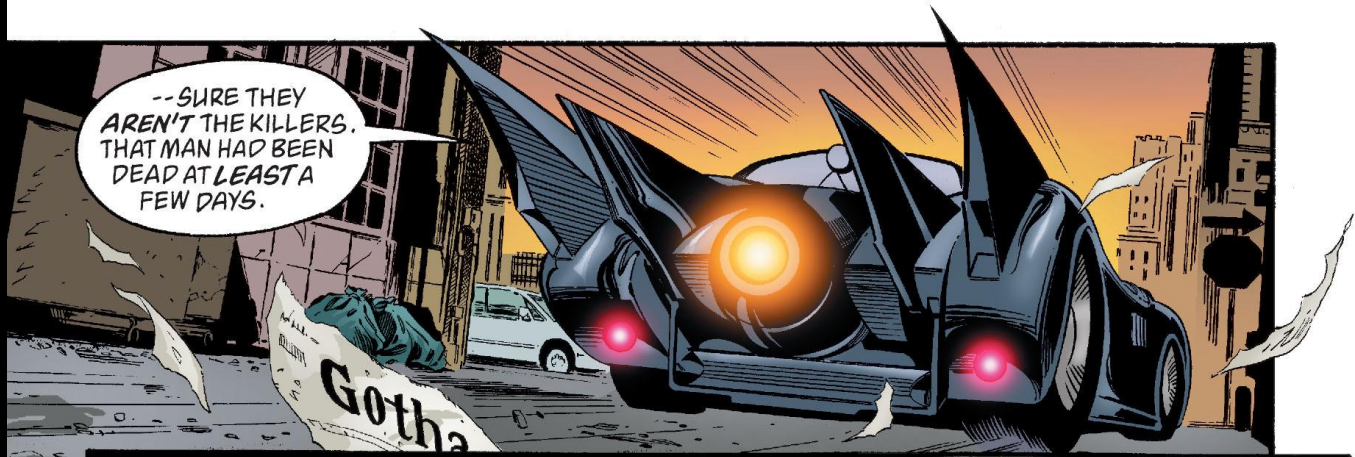


YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS ON WHAT THAT'S SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

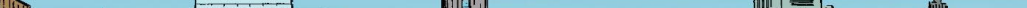


NO, DETECTIVE CROWE, I DON'T.





NEW YORK,
6:05 P.M.,...



A comic book illustration of a man in a light blue shirt and dark pants standing on a rooftop terrace, looking out at a city skyline. The terrace has a red sofa, a coffee table with a bowl, and a large potted plant. A speech bubble from the man reads: "-- NO IDENTITY HAS YET BEEN GIVEN FOR THE MAN WHOSE BODY WAS FOUND THIS MORNING AT THE FOOT OF THIS HISTORIC MONUMENT...". A television set on the wall shows a man in a suit.

... AND THOUGH SOURCES HAVE REVEALED THERE WAS WRITING FOUND ON THE CORPSE, POLICE ARE NOT RELEASING THE **CONTENTS** OF THIS ALLEGED MESSAGE.



B-DEEP-DOEEP

YES? ...YES,
TED, I JUST HEARD
MYSELF,...

THEY
SAY
WHAT?

THAT'S WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF, DAMN.

W NO... NOT, FOR C INTO I SAVE.

GOTHAM HONORS HERO

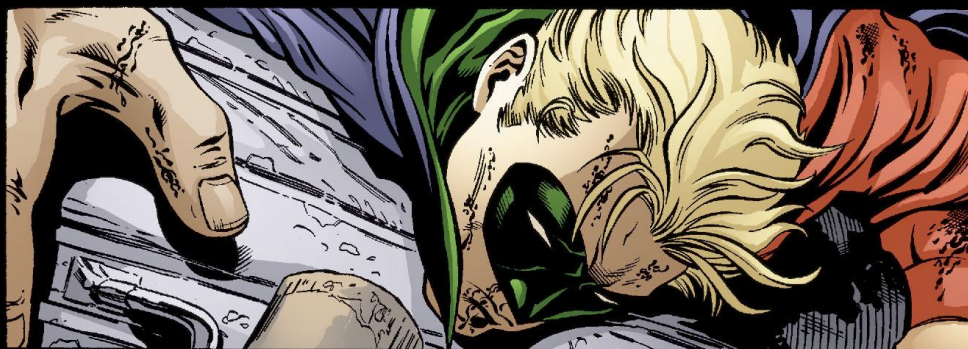
The portion of 2 centuries ago green motor. A big, "Three time First—to bring the First Third—to be new man who if a lamp from it. It that Chang used the strange lamp flame green. Is Over the road passed through good fortune to 1 children. It that of a pattern at. At Arkham Asylum a train lantern. T restoring the past.

Finally, engine self holding the 1 over a bridge the had supervised sen Scott's com over a company Decker. The ven bridge blown up passed over it. S survived. A voic strutting Scott t the could top the

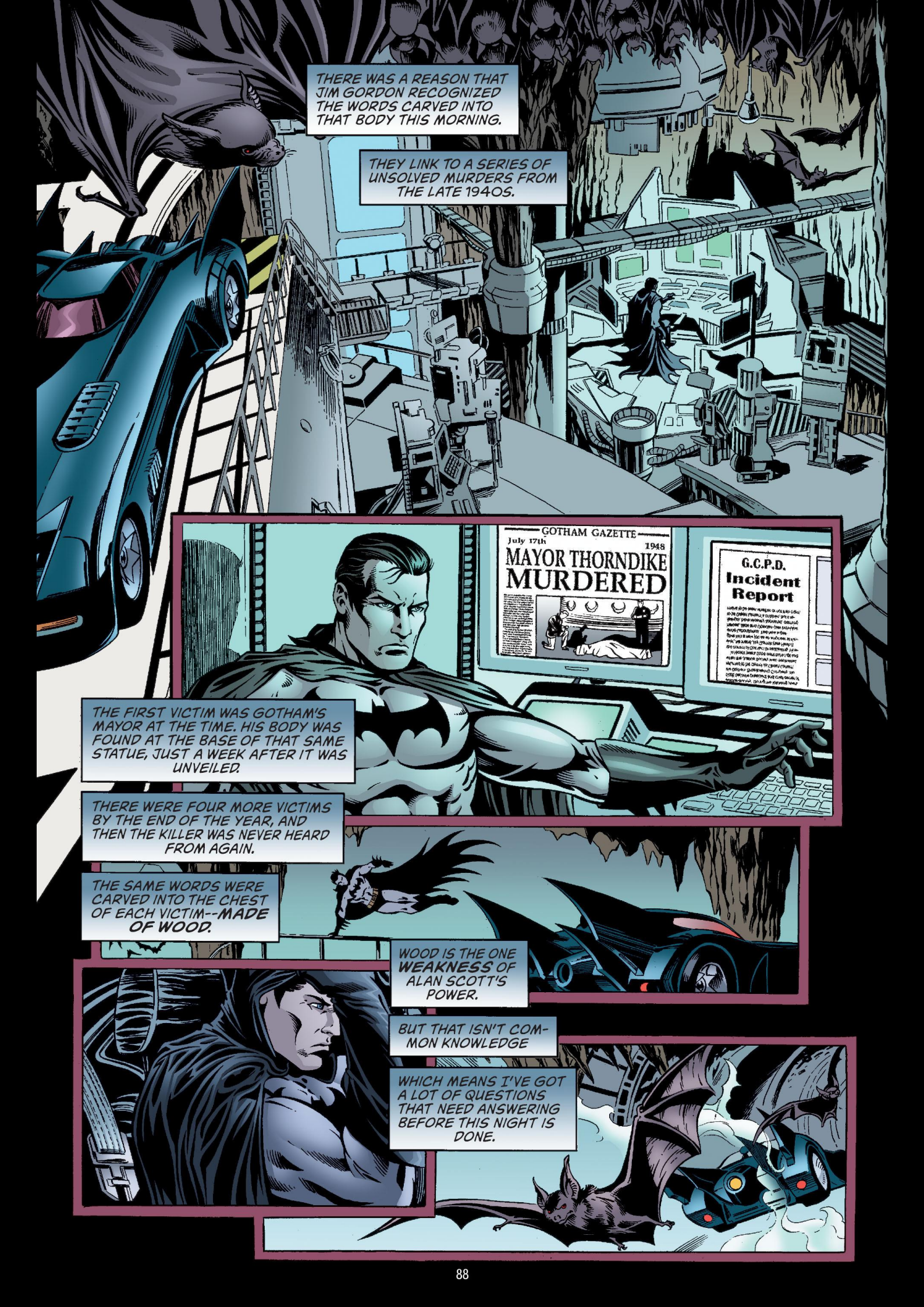
He should not tell to Earth the form of a glowing one passed from it, say-shel / flame green sth! Second—to bring to power! Chang, a Child the "metals" made / other people, rising anger the gods by using attached him. The lamp ng Chang's assassins, adding years the lamp, army hands, bringing a good end destruction to same into the possession from Asylum (see who removed the lamp into a lantern flamed green), in't be sorry.

or Alan Scott found himself as he rode a train construction of which he The government had cho any to build the bridge, seized by a man named sth! Decker had the wrecking the train as it est, holding the lantern.



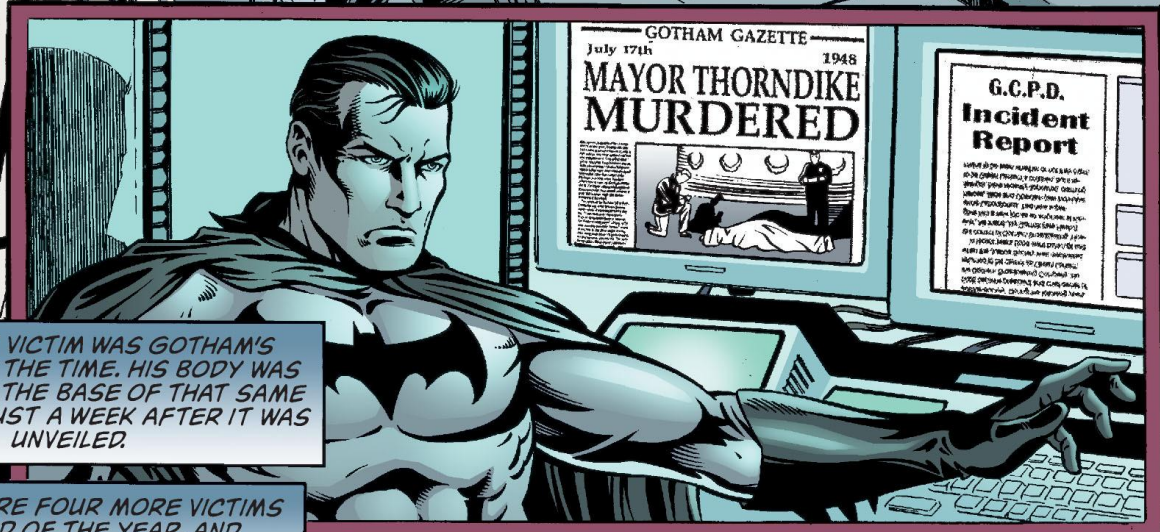






THERE WAS A REASON THAT JIM GORDON RECOGNIZED THE WORDS CARVED INTO THAT BODY THIS MORNING.

THEY LINK TO A SERIES OF UNSOLVED MURDERS FROM THE LATE 1940S.



THE FIRST VICTIM WAS GOTHAM'S MAYOR AT THE TIME. HIS BODY WAS FOUND AT THE BASE OF THAT SAME STATUE, JUST A WEEK AFTER IT WAS UNVEILED.

THERE WERE FOUR MORE VICTIMS BY THE END OF THE YEAR, AND THEN THE KILLER WAS NEVER HEARD FROM AGAIN.

THE SAME WORDS WERE CARVED INTO THE CHEST OF EACH VICTIM--MADE OF WOOD.

WOOD IS THE ONE WEAKNESS OF ALAN SCOTT'S POWER.

BUT THAT ISN'T COMMON KNOWLEDGE

WHICH MEANS I'VE GOT A LOT OF QUESTIONS THAT NEED ANSWERING BEFORE THIS NIGHT IS DONE.

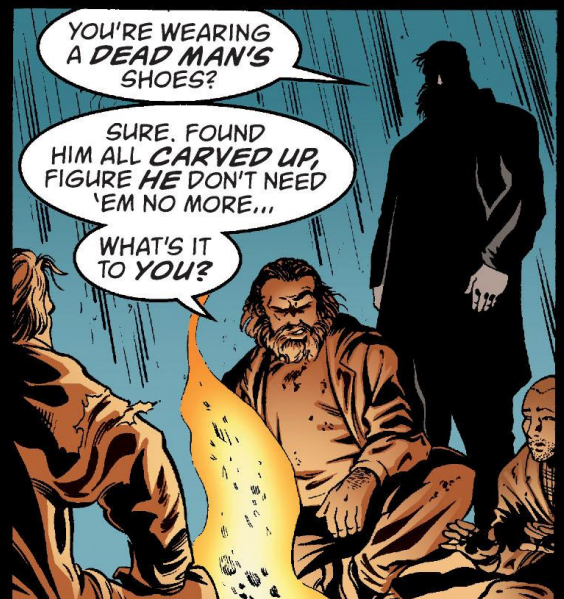


--AN' SOME
OLD GIMP WUZ TRYIN'
TO KEEP ME FROM HAVIN'
A DECENT PAIR'A SHOES
FOR ONCE...



I CUT
HIM *GOOD*,
THOUGH. NEED
TWO CANES
NOW.

DON'T
FORGET THE
WALLET, TOO,
HEATHCLIFF...
GOT ALMOST
TWO HUNDRED
BUCKS.



YOU'RE WEARING
A *DEAD MAN'S*
SHOES?

SURE. FOUND
HIM ALL *CARVED UP*,
FIGURE *HE* DON'T NEED
'EM NO MORE...

WHAT'S IT
TO YOU?



I'M
TAKING
THEM.

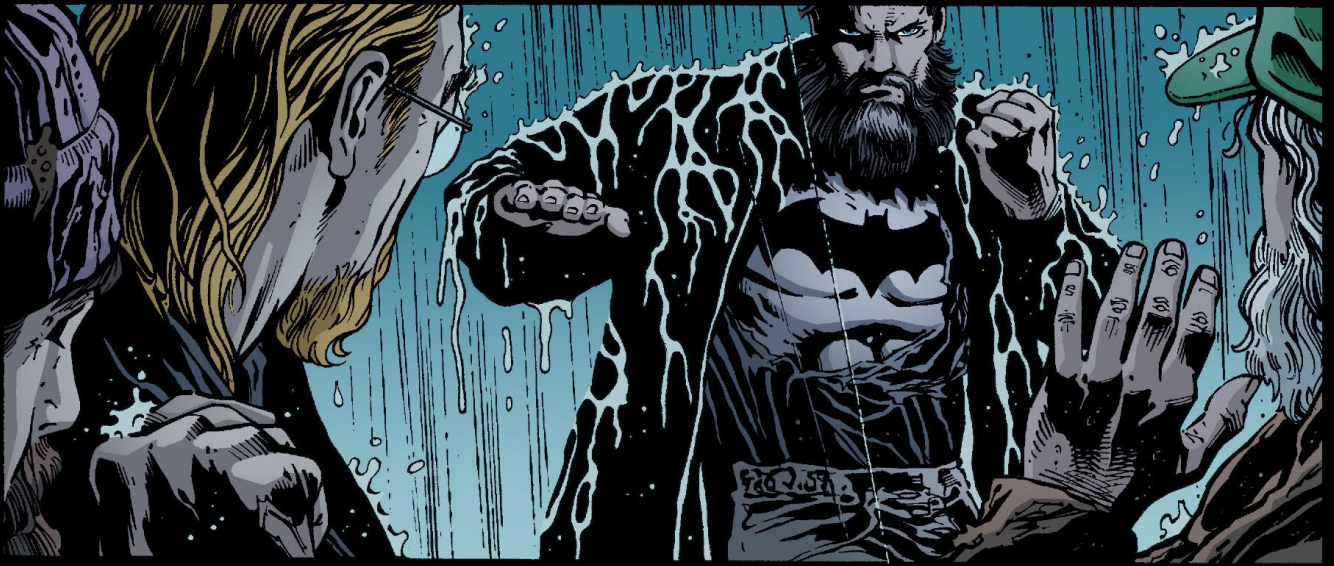
THE
WALLET,
TOO.



WHAT?

WHO
THE HELL'RE
YOU?





THE I.D. IN THE WALLET
NAMES OUR VICTIM AS
ONE JAMES SIME.

HE WAS REPORTED
MISSING FOUR DAYS
AGO BY HIS WIFE.

ORACLE DOES A QUICK CHECK ON
HIS CREDIT CARDS AND FINDS HIS
LAST PURCHASE WAS FIVE DAYS
AGO AT A FLOWER SHOP NEAR
GRANT PARK.

HIS WIFE NEVER
RECEIVED THE
FLOWERS.

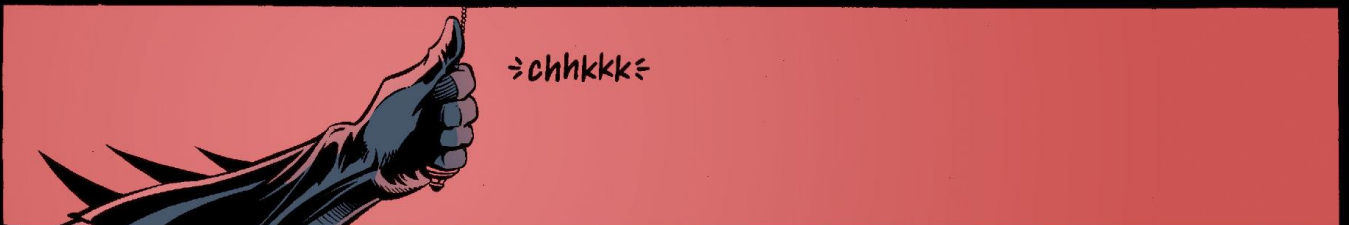
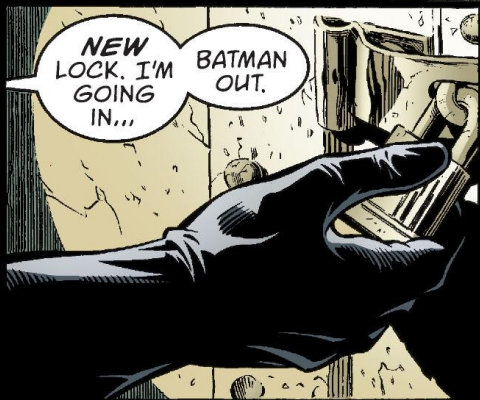
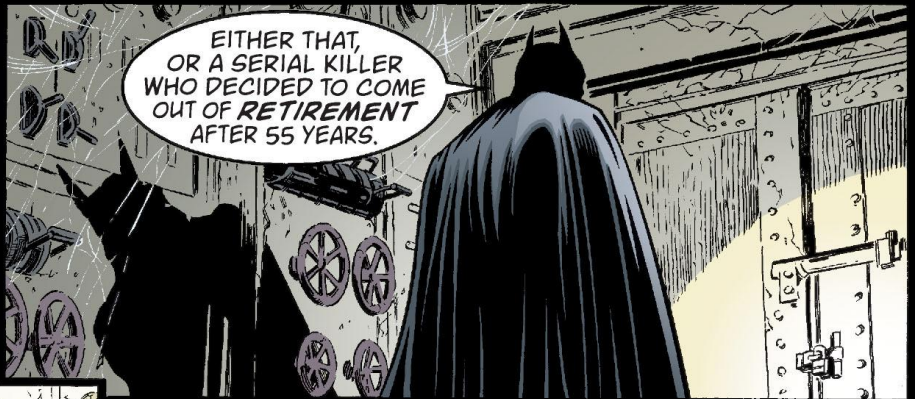
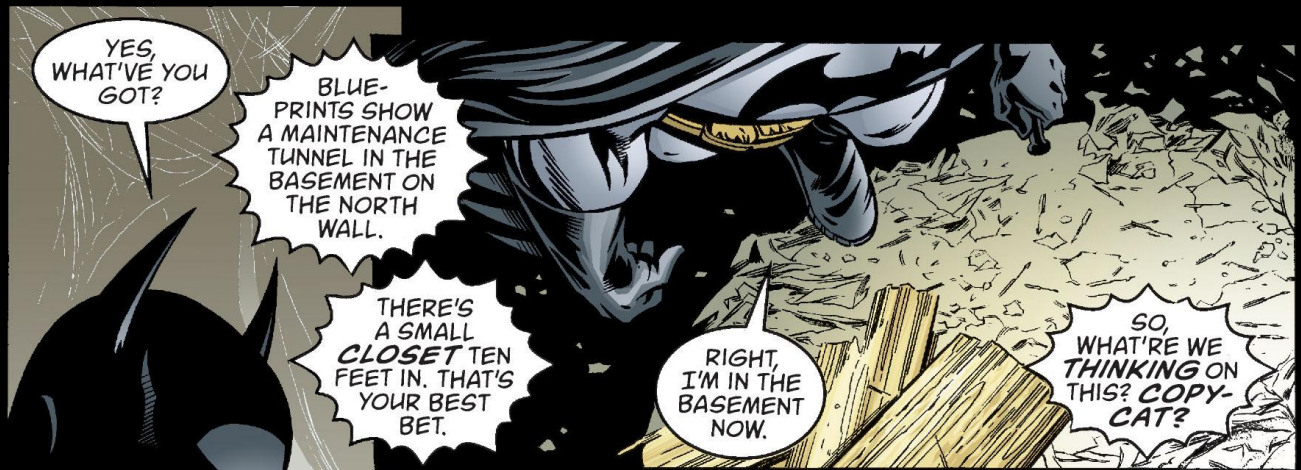
THE SEWING MACHINE
NEEDLE IMBEDDED IN
SIME'S SHOE HASN'T
BEEN MANUFACTURED
SINCE THE 1930S...

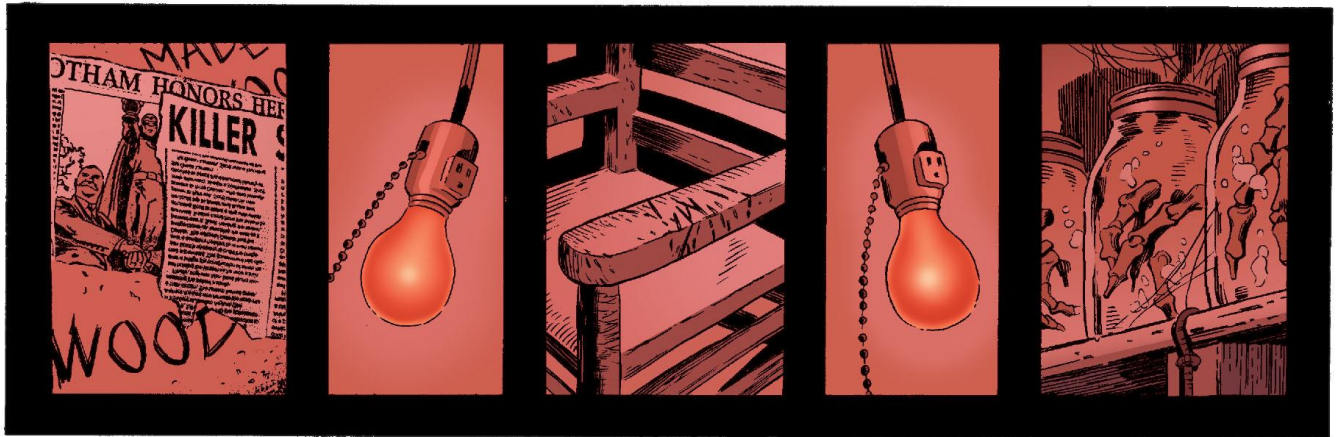
...AND HALF A MILE FROM
THE FLOWER SHOP IS A
SEWING FACTORY THAT'S
BEEN ABANDONED SINCE
THE DEPRESSION.

GEIGER
SHIRTWAIST
FACTORY



BRUCE?
ARE YOU
INSIDE?

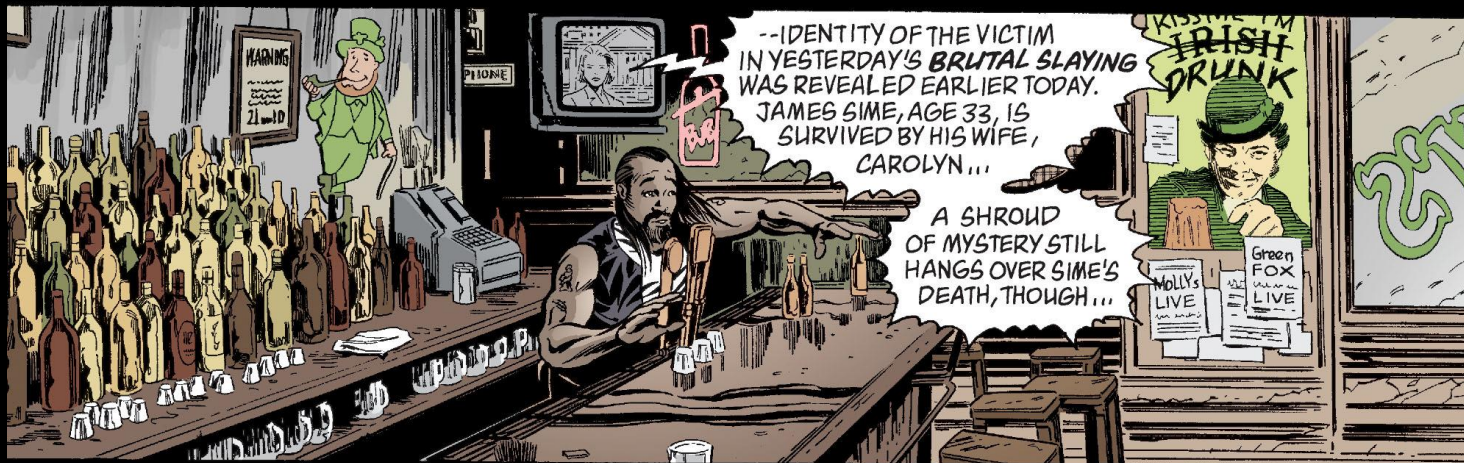


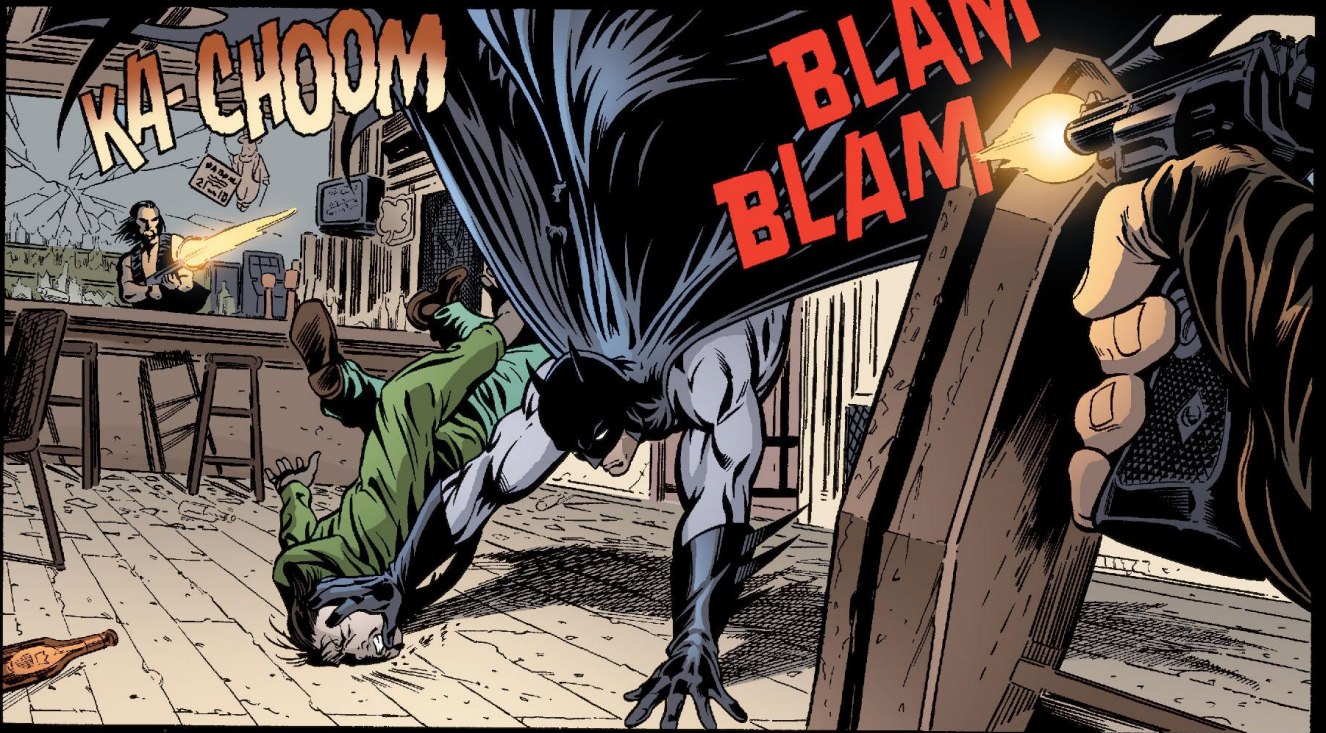
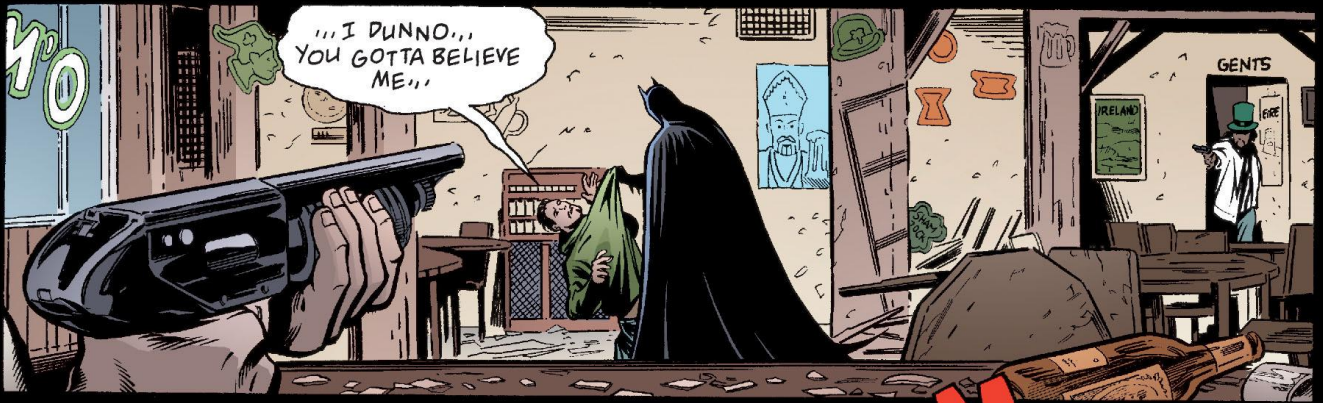




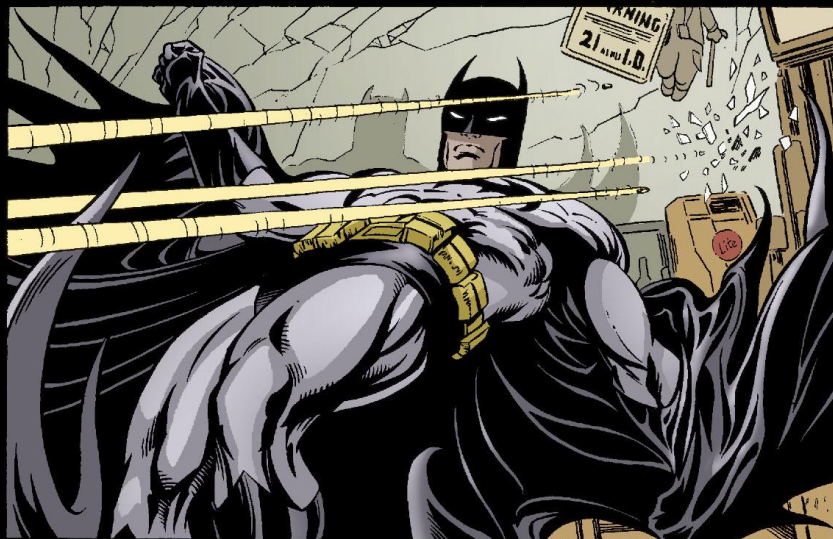


TSAGE
2003



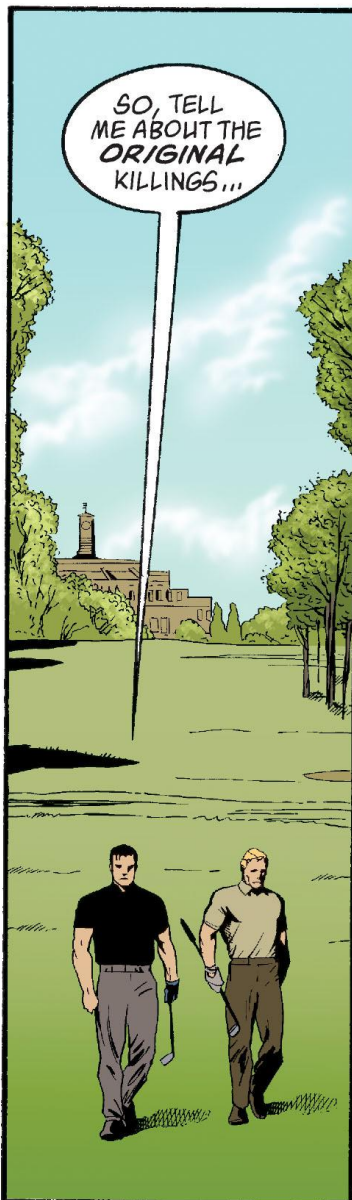


BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!





I THOUGHT
WE TALKED
ABOUT **THIS**
ALREADY...





BUT OTHER THAN MAYOR THORNDIKE, **NONE** OF THE VICTIMS HAD ANY CONNECTION TO ME, OR EVEN TO **EACH OTHER...**



"...NOT THAT I COULD FIND, AT LEAST..."

--APPRECIATE ALL THE TIME YOU'VE BEEN DEVOTING, LANTERN, **TRULY...**

...BUT I GOTTA WONDER IF YOUR TIME WOULDN'T BE BETTER SPENT CHASING **GRUNDY**, INSTEAD. THAT FREAK'S STILL OUT THERE **SOMEWHERE**, TOO.



OH, I'M **WORKING** ON FINDING GRUNDY AS WELL, CHIEF... BUT I CAN'T JUST LET THIS OTHER MATTER **GO...**



THERE SOMETHING YOU AIN'T **TELLING** ME HERE?

NO... I SIMPLY WANT THIS KILLER BROUGHT TO **JUSTICE**. THE MAYOR WAS A FRIEND.



"I FELT **TERRIBLE** HAVING TO KEEP MY SECRET UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT WHAT ELSE COULD I **DO?**"

"MY FAMILY'S SAFETY, MY CITY'S SAFETY, ALL DEPENDED ON ME. ON MY POWER, AND MY SECRET."



"I CAN ONLY IMAGINE HOW BAD IT WOULD'VE BEEN IF ONE OF MY ADVERSARIES HAD DISCOVERED MY WEAKNESS."

"MY BATTLES WERE HARD ENOUGH ALREADY."



"SO I TRIED TO PURSUE THIS MURDERER ON MY OWN, KNOWING THAT HIS MESSAGE WASN'T TO THE POLICE OR THE REST OF THE CITY..."



"...IT WAS TO ME."





BUT NEITHER I NOR THE POLICE EVER FOUND ANY CLUES, REALLY, AND THEN THE KILLINGS JUST STOPPED.

I KEPT **WAITING** FOR ANOTHER BODY TO SURFACE SOMEWHERE, DREADING THE DAY IT WOULD HAPPEN... BUT NONE EVER DID.

DIDN'T YOU KEEP INVESTIGATING ANYWAY?



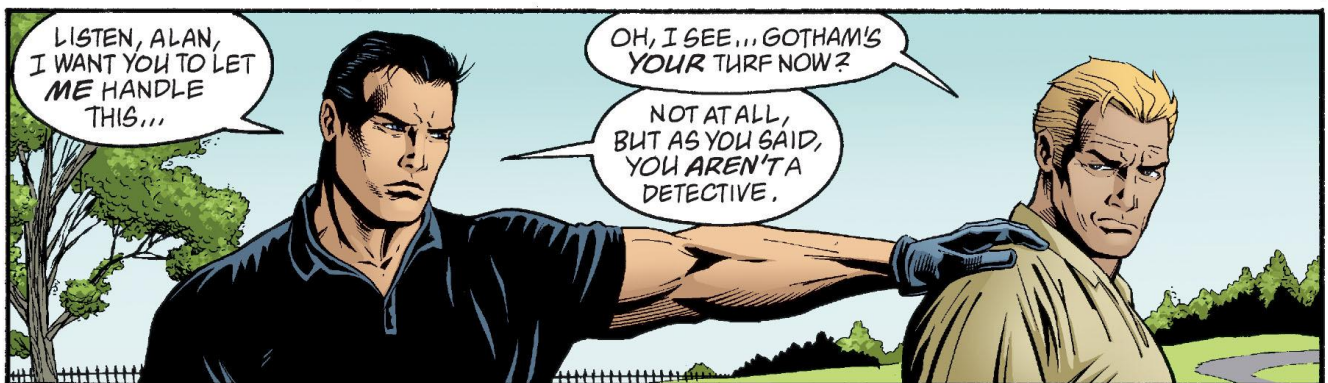
I TRIED TO, BUT TO BE HONEST, I WAS JUST **RELIEVED** THAT THE KILLING HAD STOPPED. I HAD PLENTY OF OTHER BATTLES TO FIGHT...

...AND I WAS NEVER A DETECTIVE, BRUCE.



BUT NOW IT'S ALL HAPPENING AGAIN. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT **FEELS LIKE**, YOUR MISTAKES COMING BACK TO **HAUNT** YOU?

ALL TOO WELL.



LISTEN, ALAN, I WANT YOU TO LET **ME** HANDLE THIS...

OH, I SEE... GOTHAM'S YOUR TURF NOW?

NOT AT ALL, BUT AS YOU SAID, YOU **AREN'T** A DETECTIVE.



AND IT SEEMS TO ME, THIS KIND OF CRIME... IT'S JUST...

...BENEATH YOU.



SO, JUST LET **ME** TAKE CARE OF IT... OKAY?



YOU TALKED, I LISTENED... I DIDN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES.

NOW, DO YOU WANT TO QUESTION THIS MAN, OR WERE YOU JUST TEARING THAT BAR APART FOR SHOW?



FINE... TAKE HIM TO THE ROOF, OUT OF SIGHT.



EARLIER TODAY I LEARNED THAT JAMES SIME WAS RUNNING A BUSINESS FRONT FOR THE CLOVER BOYS. IT WASN'T HARD TO FIND OUT, OBVIOUSLY, SINCE IT'S ALL OVER THE NEWS TONIGHT.

BUT JACKIE O'ROURDAN, THE GANG'S DE FACTO LEADER, AND THE ONE WHO MIGHT HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT SIME, IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.



I ASSUME HE'S HIDING OUT, BUT IT'S WORSE THAN THAT.

TURNS OUT JACKIE'S MEN HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET HOLD OF HIM AT ALL FOR THE LAST THREE DAYS...



AND CONSIDERING HIS CLOSE TIES TO SIME, I'M GUESSING THIS MEANS OUR KILLER IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON VICTIM NUMBER TWO. DAMN IT.

WHA-WHA-WHA-
WHAT'RE YOU
GONNAD-D-DO
TO ME?

YOU
SHOT AT
ME.



I DON'T EVER
WANT TO SEE YOU
IN GOTHAM
AGAIN...

...UNDERSTOOD?

Y-Y-YEAH...
YEAH. I'M ON
THE NEXT TRAIN...
I SWEAR...



INTERESTING METHOD. YOU
KNOW HE'LL JUST JOIN UP
WITH ANOTHER GANG IN
THE NEXT TOWN...

I DON'T
THINK SO.



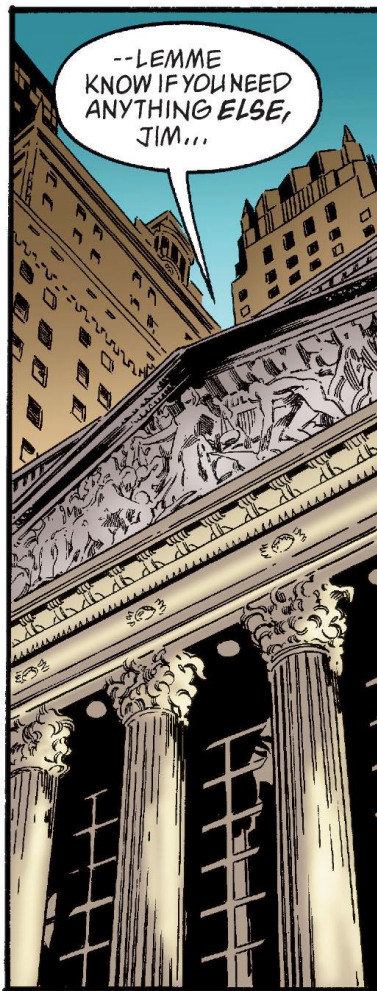
WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE
US, THEN? YOU GOING TO TRY
TO CONVINCE ME TO SIT ON
THE SIDELINES AGAIN?

NO.
THERE'S TOO
MUCH WORK
TO BE DONE
TONIGHT.



YOU
COMING?





--LEMMER
KNOW IF YOU NEED
ANYTHING ELSE,
JIM...



...I'LL BE HERE
ALL NIGHT WORKING
ON THE BRIEF FOR THAT
TETCH APPEAL.

THANKS,
CALVIN...

Assistant District Attorney
Calvin Jaffe was once
Harvey Dent's protégé.
He's still here, fighting
the good fight.

And he doesn't think
twice about giving me
access to classified
documents.

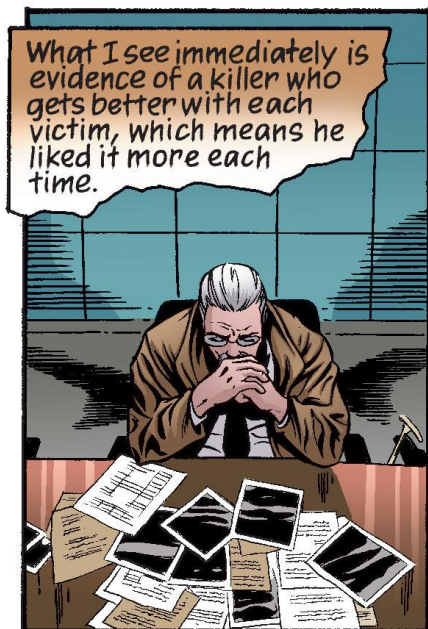
The G.C.P.D. thinks the new killer is a
copycat. The *Made of Wood* murders
were well-known once, so it's no surprise
if some sicko tries to duplicate them.

I'm not so sure, though, and
neither is he. The use of the
killer's old hideout tells me
it's got to be someone with
inside knowledge of the
original murders.

So, solving these
murders should
lead me to this
new killer.

A 50-year-old series of
unsolved murders. Sheez,
no pressure, right?

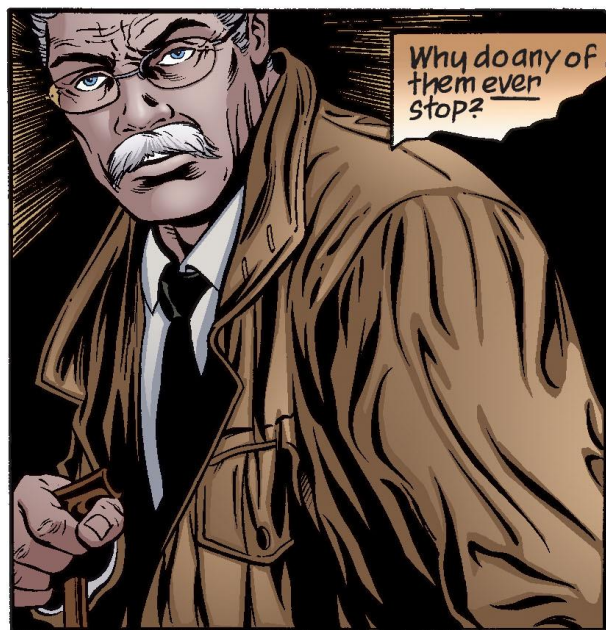
Of course, we do know
a lot more about the mind
of a serial killer than we
did in the 1940s, so maybe
this isn't a completely
hopeless task.



What I see immediately is evidence of a killer who gets better with each victim, which means he liked it more each time.



So why did he stop all of a sudden that December?



Why do any of them ever stop?



CAN YOU GET ME THE RECORDS OF ANY ARKHAM COMMITMENTS FROM DECEMBER OF 1948?

UH, PROBABLY, YEAH. HAVE TO GO ACROSS THE STREET TO THE COURTHOUSE BASEMENT, THOUGH...



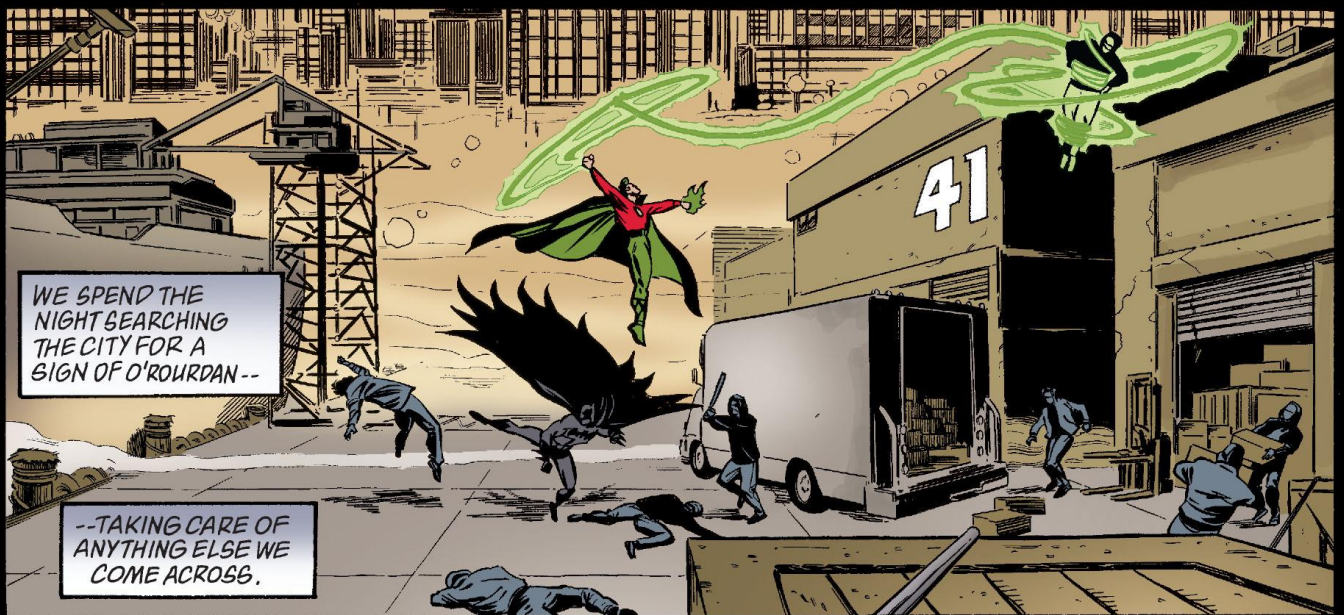
THEY GOT DEATH CERTIFICATES DOWN THERE, TOO?



SHOULD HAVE FILE COPIES, AT LEAST... WHAT'VE YOU GOT?

NOTHING YET... JUST WORKING A HUNCH...

ASSIST DISTR ATTOR



BUT THEN, HE DOESN'T
HAVE MY **MOTIVE** FOR
DOING WHAT WE DO...



... HE DOES IT SIMPLY
BECAUSE THIS IS WHO
HE IS...



... A HERO.

THANKS,
THAT MIGHT'VE
HURT.



YOU
WOULD'VE
DODGED
IT.

THE **EAST END**.
WE'VE CHECKED
EVERYPLACE
ELSE.

AND I'VE GOT
A **FRIEND** THERE
WHO MAY BE ABLE
TO DIG UP SOME
INFORMATION.

SO...
WHERE TO
NOW?

WAIT.

BRUCE,
IT'S ORACLE...
BAD NEWS.



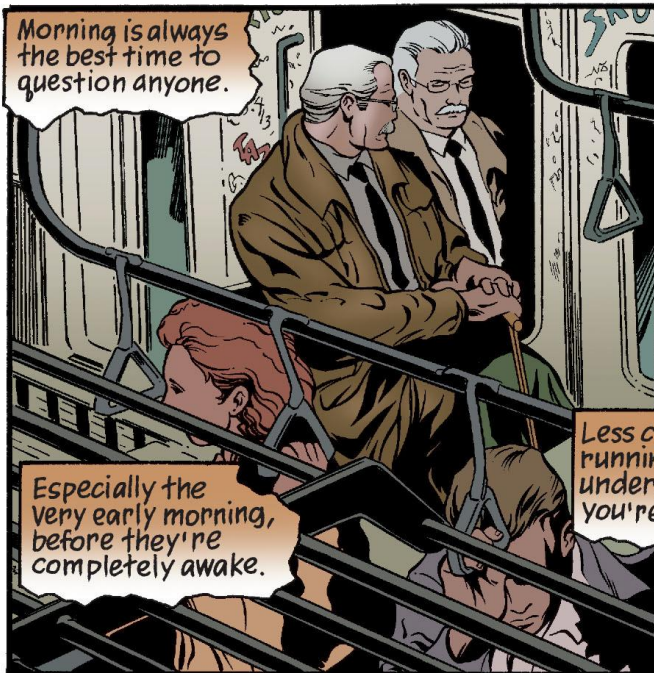
LOOKS
LIKE WE'RE
TOO LATE...







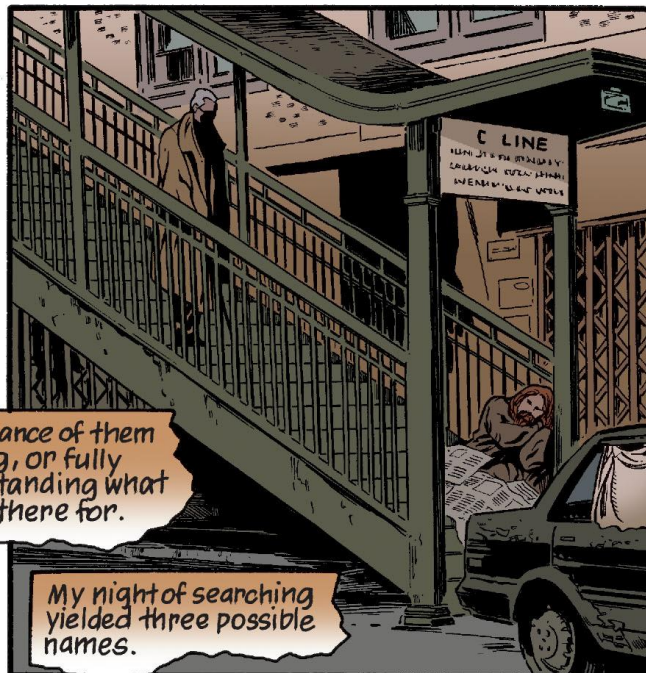




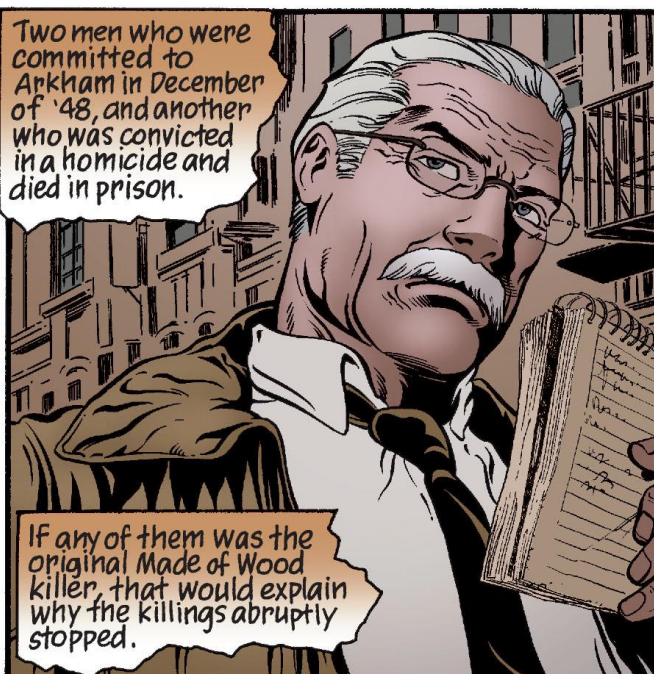
Morning is always the best time to question anyone.

Especially the very early morning, before they're completely awake.

Less chance of them running, or fully understanding what you're there for.

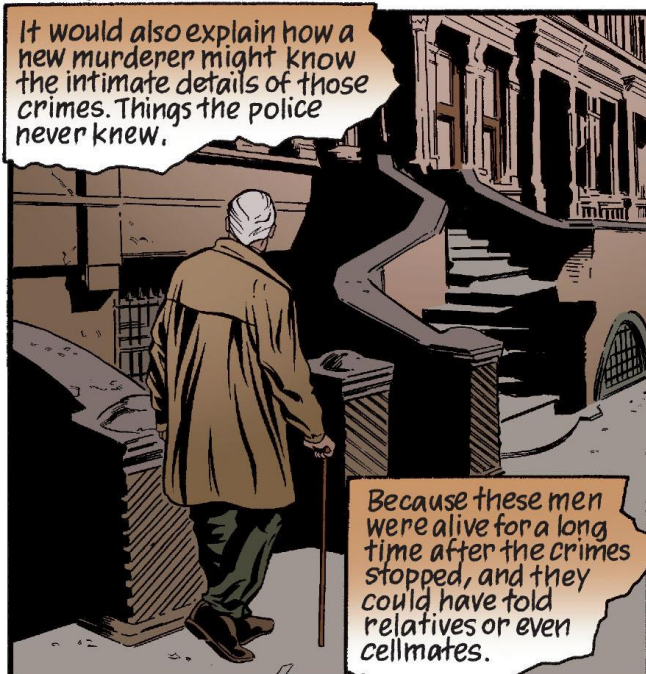


My night of searching yielded three possible names.



Two men who were committed to Arkham in December of '48, and another who was convicted in a homicide and died in prison.

If any of them was the original Made of Wood killer, that would explain why the killings abruptly stopped.



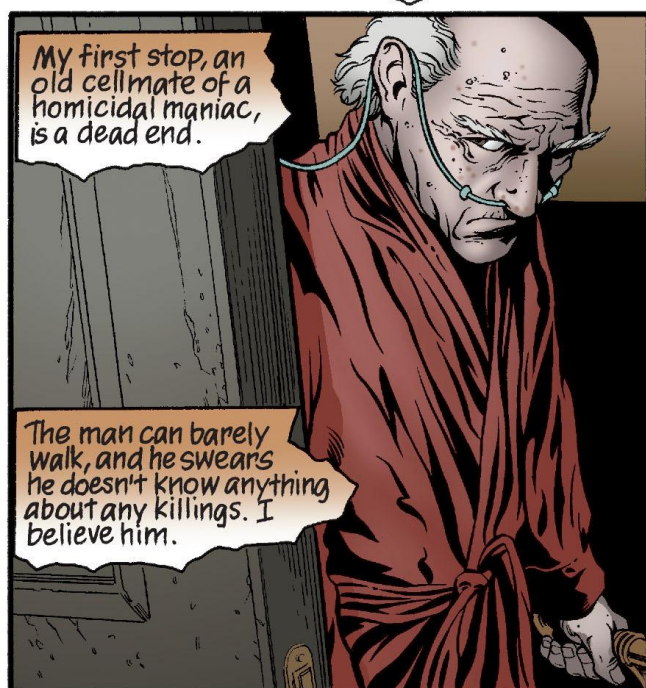
It would also explain how a new murderer might know the intimate details of those crimes. Things the police never knew.

Because these men were alive for a long time after the crimes stopped, and they could have told relatives or even cellmates.



I should leave this to him, probably... but where's the danger in asking a few questions?

I do have the training, and I can't just sit on my hands all day long.



My first stop, an old cellmate of a homicidal maniac, is a dead end.

The man can barely walk, and he swears he doesn't know anything about any killings. I believe him.

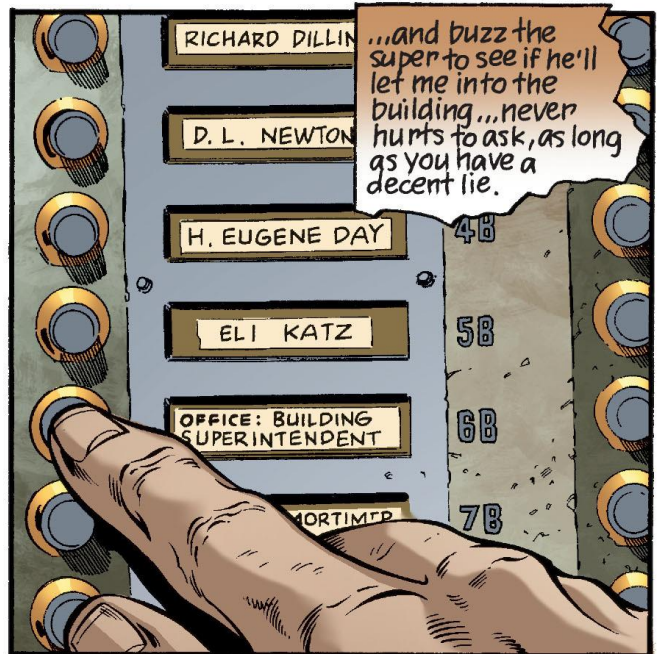
Next on my list is Francis Sullivan, the grandson of Seamus Sullivan, an Irish immigrant whose wife had him committed in December of '48.



Seamus died at the Williams Medical Clinic two months ago. According to his files, he was a paranoid delusional. That fits the profile.

Unfortunately, his grandson isn't answering his buzzer.

I decide to get tricky...



...and buzz the super to see if he'll let me into the building... never hurts to ask, as long as you have a decent lie.



YEAH?

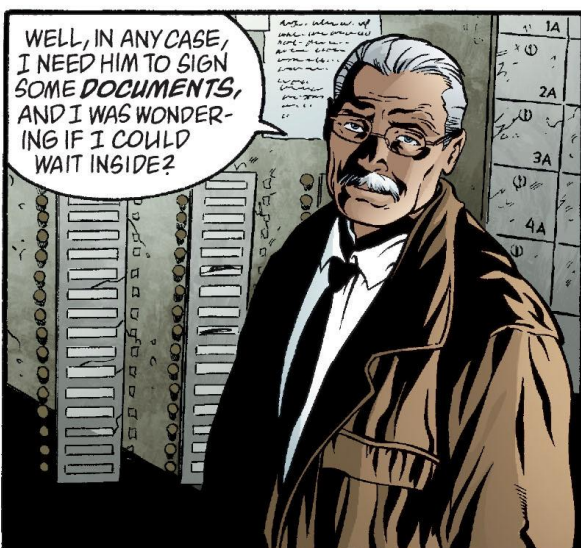
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU. I'M SUPPOSED TO MEET FRANCIS SULLIVAN...

HIS GRANDFATHER PASSED AWAY A FEW MONTHS AGO AND FRANCIS IS THE SOLE BENEFICIARY OF HIS WILL.



REALLY? THAT LITTLE SCUMBALL'S GONNA BE RICH ALL OF A SUDDEN?

JEEZ, WHAT KIND OF JUSTICE IS THAT?

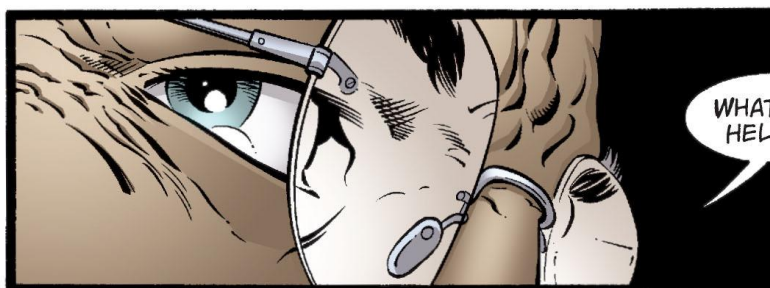


WELL, IN ANY CASE, I NEED HIM TO SIGN SOME DOCUMENTS, AND I WAS WONDERING IF I COULD WAIT INSIDE?



SURE, I GUESS SO... MAYBE OLD FRANNY'LL THROW ME A FINDER'S FEE, YOU THINK?

IT'S BEEN KNOWN TO HAPPEN.









ALAN SCOTT
WAS RIGHT.

WE MAY NOT HAVE
BEEN IN TIME TO
SAVE SIME OR
O'ROURDAN...



... BUT THERE WAS
STILL PLENTY OF
WORK TO DO.



JUST BEFORE DAWN, WE
STOP A KIDNAPPING THAT
WOULD PROBABLY HAVE
TURNED INTO SOMETHING
FAR UGLIER.

MURDER, OR
MAYBE WHITE
SLAVERY.

I'VE SEEN IT
ALL BEFORE.

I DON'T
HOLD BACK.



AND I WONDER WHAT ALAN THINKS OF THAT. THE SAVAGE PART OF WHAT BEING BATMAN IS ABOUT.

I DON'T ENJOY HURTING PEOPLE, BUT IT HAS TO BE DONE.

YOUR YERBA MATE, MASTER BRUCE, AS REQUESTED.

I WASN'T SURE WHAT YOU PREFERRED, MR. SCOTT, SO I MADE COFFEE AND TEA...

OH, THAT'S GREAT, ALFRED, BUT PLEASE, LET'S DROP THE FORMALITIES. CALL ME ALAN.

WHILE THE THOUGHT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED, I'M AFRAID MY YEARS OF TRAINING WOULD NEVER--

BRUCE!

THANK YOU, ALFRED.

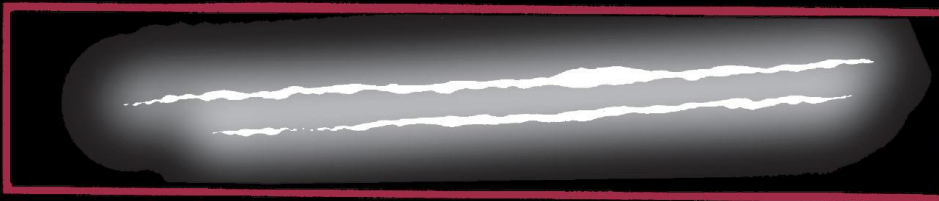


LOOK, I DON'T--I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON EXACTLY, BUT--BUT I THINK WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM.

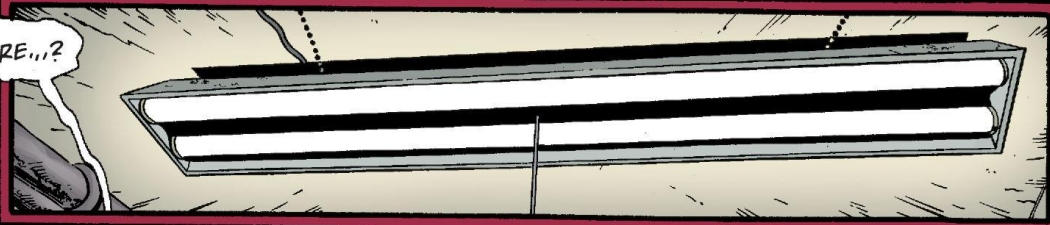
BARBARA... WHAT IS IT?

MY FATHER. HE DIDN'T COME HOME LAST NIGHT...

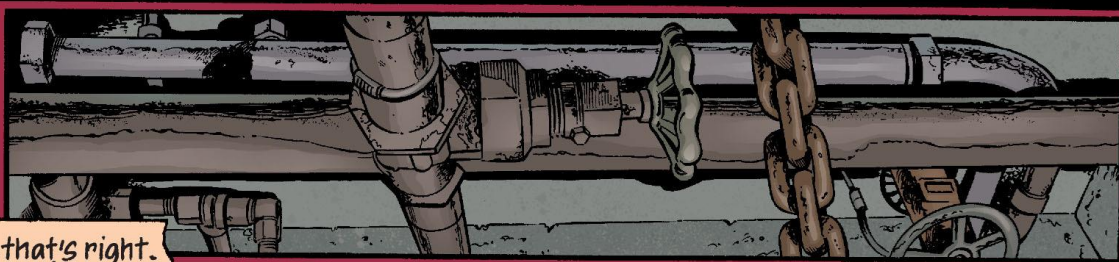




WH - WHERE...?



Wait...that's right.
I was looking for
leads on the Made
of Wood killer.



THIRD VICTIM FOUND

POLICE HAVE
NO LEADS



KILLER LEAVES MESSAGE ON CORPSE

May 13th, 2003



Oh...this is
not good.

Not good
at all.

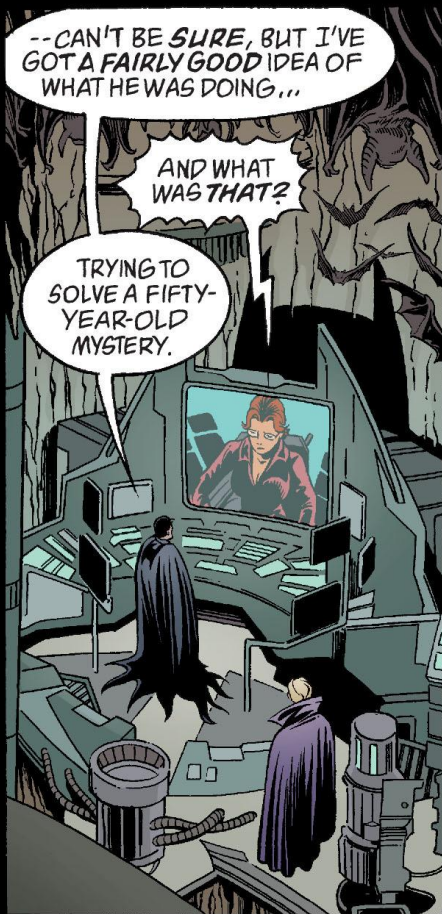


'BOUT TIME YOU CAME TO...
I DIDN'T HIT YOU *THAT* HARD, DID I,
COMMISSIONER GORDON?

I'M--I'M
NOT A *COP*
ANYMORE...

OH, I
KNOW... BUT
YOU KNOW WHAT
THEY SAY...

...ONCE A COP,
ALWAYS WORTH
KILLIN'.



I START AT THE BEGINNING. THE KILLER'S OLD HIDEOUT WAS IN THE GEIGER SHIRTWAIST FACTORY, WHICH WAS CLOSED IN 1935.

SO HE HAD TO BE SOMEONE WHO WAS FAMILIAR ENOUGH WITH THE FACTORY TO REMEMBER THAT HIDDEN NOOK IN THE BASEMENT...

THANKS FOR TAKING SOME TIME TO SPEAK WITH US, MRS. HALLIHAN...

CERTAINLY, YOUNG MAN. IT'S NOT EVERY DAY A LADY GETS INTERVIEWED FOR THE PAPER. ALTHOUGH I'M SURPRISED ANYONE STILL HAS ANY INTEREST IN THE GEIGER FACTORY,

GOETHAM GARDENS
PERMANENT CARE
FACILITY

I JUST FEEL LUCKY TO HAVE FOUND SOMEONE WHO ACTUALLY WORKED IN SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART OF GOTHAM'S HERITAGE.

NOW, I UNDERSTAND THERE WAS SOME CHILD LABOR GOING ON BEFORE THE FACTORY CLOSED DOWN. DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT THAT?

CHILD LABOR? NOT THAT I CAN RECALL. DOUBTLESS, OLD MAN GEIGER WOULD'VE TRIED TO GET AWAY WITH IT, BUT CHILDREN COULDN'T WORK THE MACHINES.

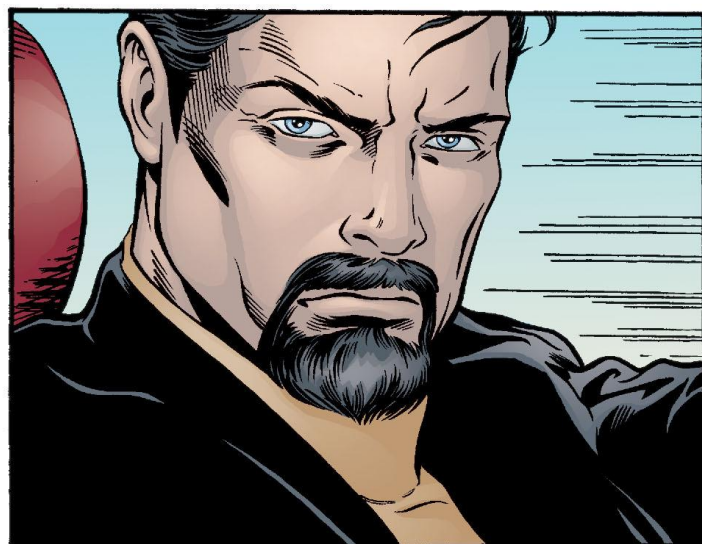
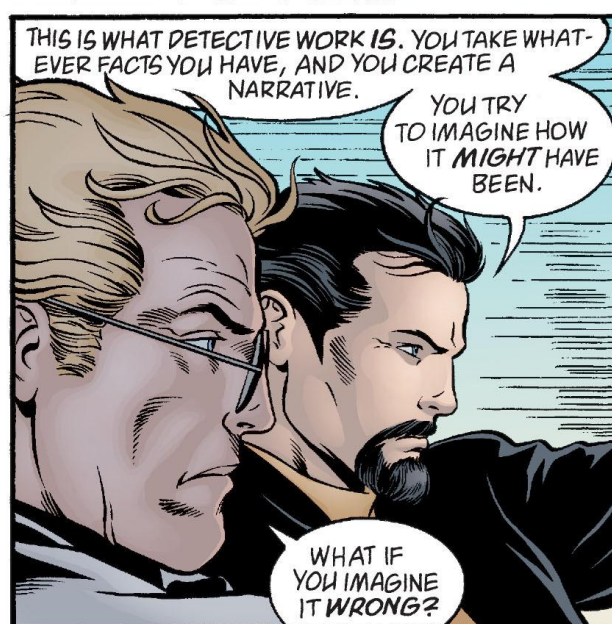
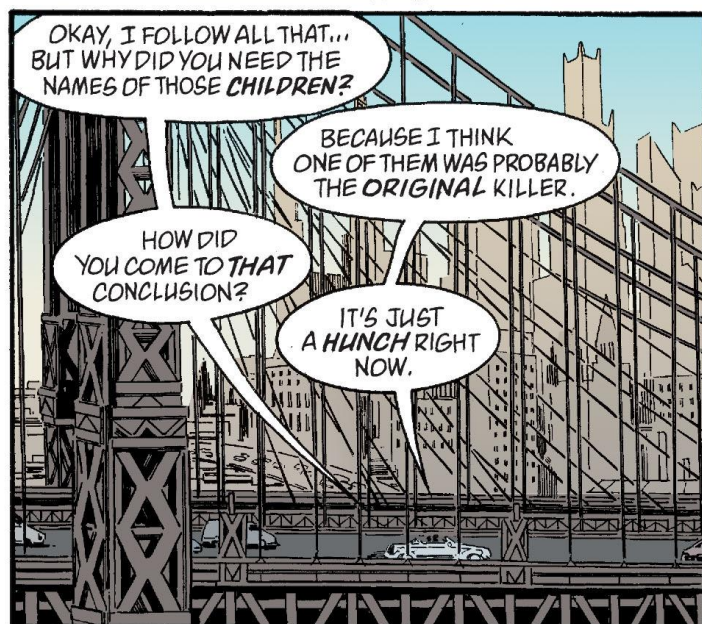
REALLY? BECAUSE I HEARD THERE WERE KIDS RUNNING AROUND THE FACTORY FLOOR...

WELL, OKAY, THAT'S TRUE. SOME OF US BROUGHT OUR CHILDREN WITH US. IT WASN'T STRICTLY ALLOWED, BUT IT WAS EITHER THAT OR LET THEM ROAM THE STREETS, FALLING IN WITH THE WRONG KIND.

THE MANAGER LET THEM PLAY IN THE BASEMENT WHILE WE WORKED. DOCKED US PART OF OUR PAY TO DO IT, TOO...

AH, INTERESTING.

YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO REMEMBER THE NAMES OF ANY OF THOSE CHILDREN? I'D LOVE TO TRACK SOME OF THEM FOR THIS PIECE, TOO...





THING I WANNA
KNOW IS HOW YOU
FOUND ME...?

JUST LUCKY,
I GUESS...

GOT A **STRANGE**
KINDA LUCK THEN,
DON'TCHA?

YOU'LL GET
NO ARGUMENT
ON THAT FROM
ME...

IT WAS YOUR **GRAND-
FATHER, SEAMUS
SULLIVAN**. HIS NAME WAS
ON A LIST OF MEN COM-
MITTED TO ARKHAM
AROUND THE TIME THE
MADE OF WOOD
KILLINGS ABRUPTLY
STOPPED.

I WAS GOING
TO QUESTION YOU
ABOUT HIM.



BUT YOU'DA SEEN
RIGHT THROUGH ME,
WOULDN'T YOU? YOU
GOT THOSE COP'S
EYES.

PROBABLY,
YES. I'D'VE
SUSPECTED
YOU.



GUYS LIKE YOU, **COPS**,
BOSSIN' EVERYONE AROUND.
THINK YOU'RE ALL HOT \$#@%...
NOT SUCH A **BIG SHOT**
ANYMORE, ARE YOU?

I'M NOT THE ONE
WHO HAS TO STRAP
PEOPLE TO CHAIRS
TO PROVE I'M
A MAN.



SEE? THAT'S JUST--
THAT'S NOT RIGHT... YOU
DON'T KNOW...



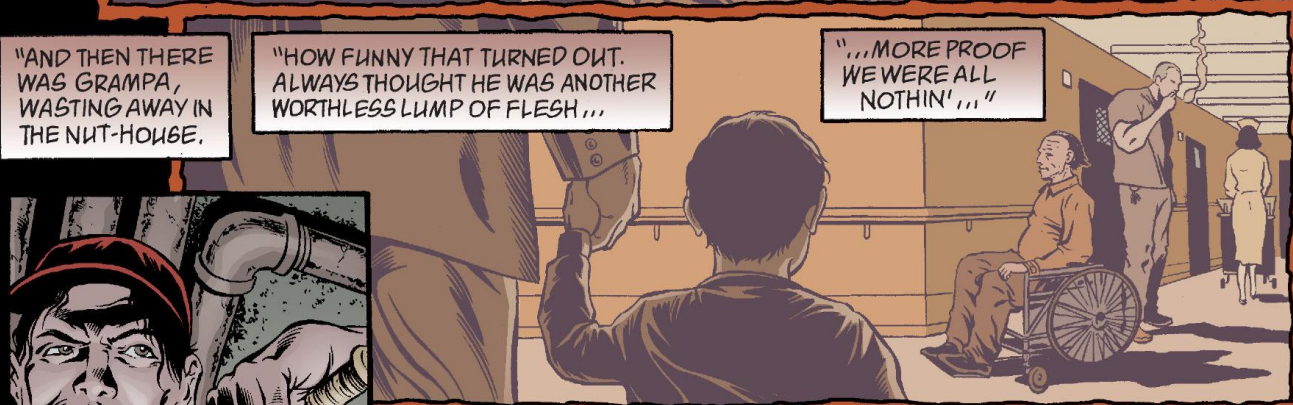
WE DON'T ALL GET **YOUR** LIFE. SOME OF US ARE DESTINED TO BE **NOTHING**, MAN... LESS THAN NOTHING. LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I BEEN A NOTHIN', FROM A WHOLE **FAMILY OF NOTHIN'S...**



"MY DAD WAS A **WEAKLING**. WORKED FOR THE IRISH MOB BACK IN THE DAY.

"THOUGHT HE WAS REAL HOT \$#@% TOO, BUT HE WAS A **JOKE** TO THEM.

"THEY **LAUGHED** AT HIS SORRY BUTT EVERY TIME HE LEFT THE **FRIGGIN' ROOM**. EVEN WHEN HIS **KID** WAS SITTING RIGHT THERE WITH THEM.



"AND THEN THERE WAS **GRAMPA**, WASTING AWAY IN THE **NUT-HOUSE**.

"HOW FUNNY THAT TURNED OUT. ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS ANOTHER **WORTHLESS LUMP OF FLESH...**

"...MORE PROOF WE WERE ALL **NOTHIN'...**"



"...AND THEN HE **DIES** A FEW MONTHS BACK AND LEAVES ME HIS **STEAMER TRUNK**.

I MEAN, HOW OLD-TIMEY AND **USELESS** CAN YOU GET?



"I'M ALL SET TO BURN THE **FRIGGIN' THING**, JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT, AND THIS DRAWER ON THE SIDE POPS OPEN AND OUT COMES HIS **NOTEBOOK...**"



AND I READ IT, AND I SEE HE **WASN'T** ALWAYS JUST SOME **JELLO-HEADED LAME-O...** HE LEFT A **MARK** ON THIS CITY THAT PEOPLE **NEVER** FORGOT...

HE WAS-- HE WAS **SOMETHIN'...**

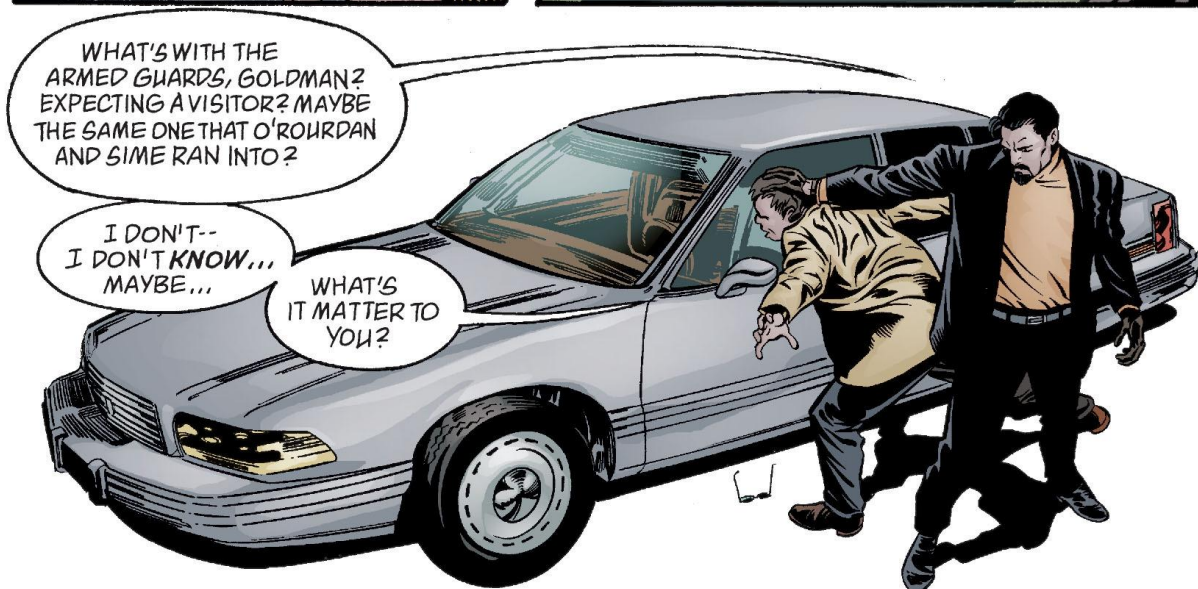
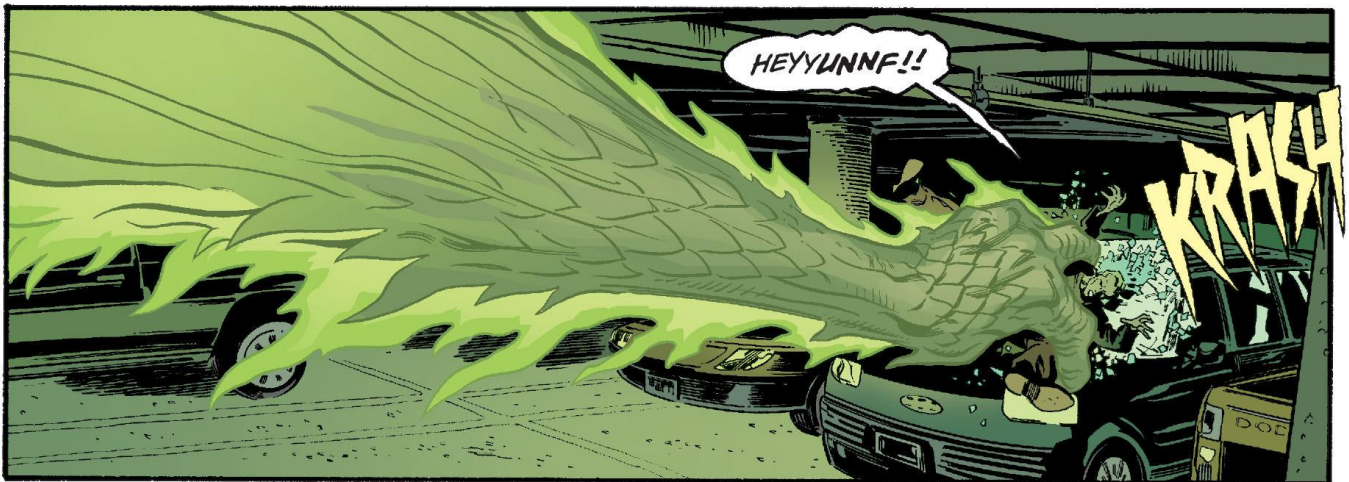
BARBARA IS ANTICIPATING MY MOVES. SHE GETS ME THE ADDRESS I WANT BEFORE I EVEN ASK FOR IT. THEN SHE HACKS INTO THEIR SYSTEM, TELLS ME WHAT TIME I NEED TO BE THERE...

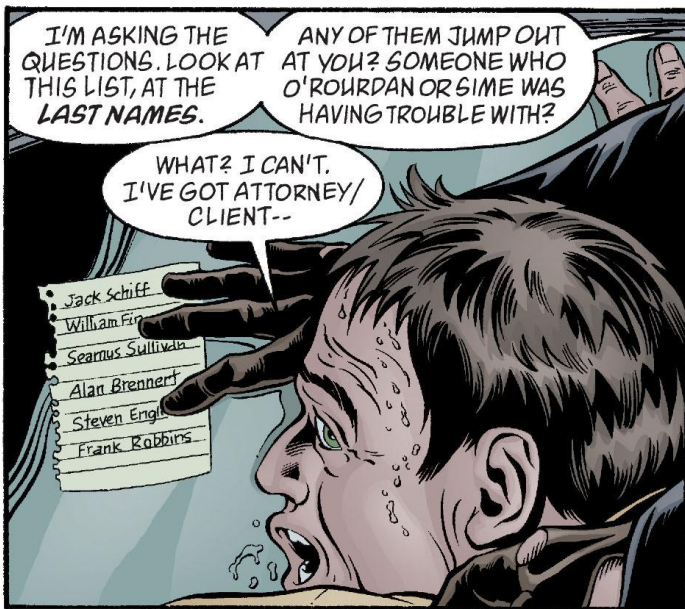
SO WHEN JACKIE O'ROURDAN'S MOB LAWYER, BEN GOLDMAN, ENTERS THE PARKING GARAGE WITH HIS SECURITY DETAIL LATE IN THE DAY...

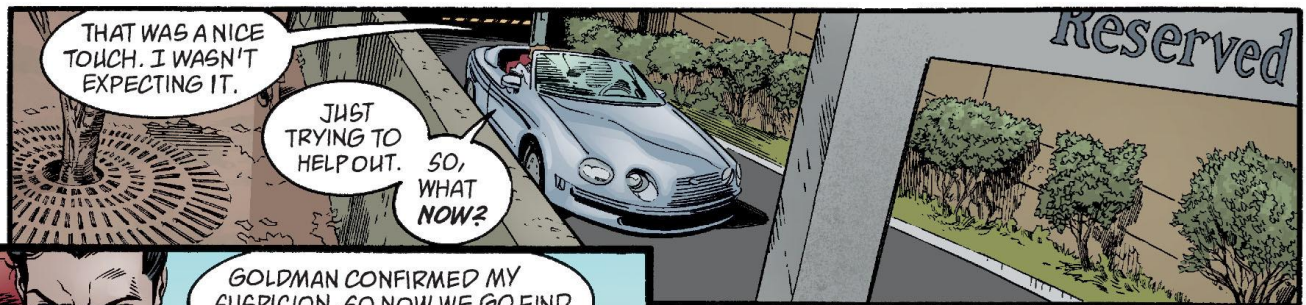


...HE GETS A SURPRISE.









THAT WAS A NICE TOUCH. I WASN'T EXPECTING IT.

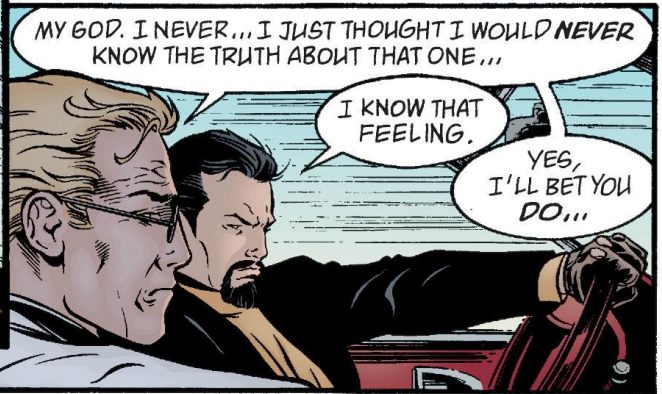
JUST TRYING TO HELP OUT.

SO, WHAT NOW?



GOLDMAN CONFIRMED MY SUSPICION, SO NOW WE GO FIND MY FRIEND.

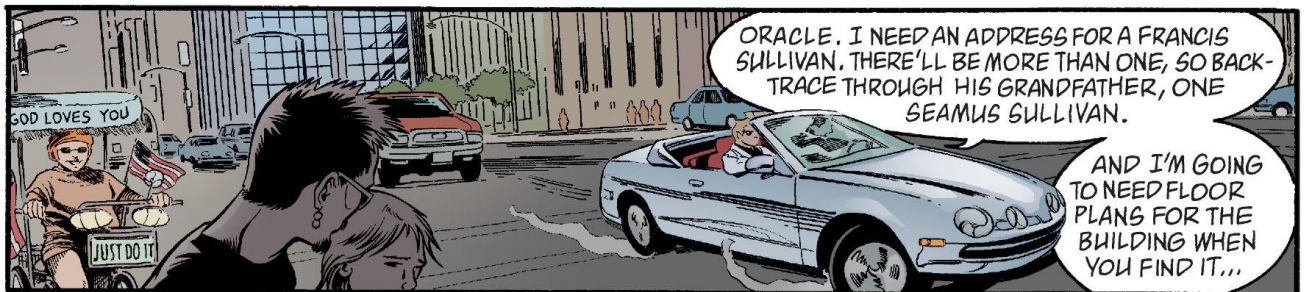
AND HOPEFULLY WE FIND OUT WHAT THE **ORIGINAL** MADE OF WOOD KILLER HAD AGAINST YOU...



MY GOD. I NEVER... I JUST THOUGHT I WOULD **NEVER** KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT THAT ONE...

I KNOW THAT FEELING.

YES, I'LL BET YOU DO...



ORACLE. I NEED AN ADDRESS FOR A FRANCIS SULLIVAN. THERE'LL BE MORE THAN ONE, SO BACK-TRACE THROUGH HIS GRANDFATHER, ONE SEAMUS SULLIVAN.

AND I'M GOING TO NEED FLOOR PLANS FOR THE BUILDING WHEN YOU FIND IT...

Making Sullivan angry doesn't work. He's lost in his own sick little world.

Only thing to do is try to keep him talking...



I DON'T--UH, I STILL DON'T **SEE** IT, FRANCIS... WHY DID YOUR GRANDFATHER KILL ALL THOSE PEOPLE?

TRYIN' TO DISTRACT ME, HUNH?

IT'S NOT GONNA **SAVE** YOU, BUT HELL... I WAS GONNA TELL YOU ANYWAY, WHILE I WORKED...



"SEE, MY GRAMPA WAS JUST A KID WHEN HIS PARENTS BROUGHT HIM OVER FROM IRELAND, AND MAN, DID HE LOVE THIS COUNTRY.

"BOUGHT INTO THE WHOLE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY ROUTINE.

"HE WATCHED HIS MOM WORK HERSELF TO DEATH IN SOME FACTORY, AND STILL ALL HE COULD SEE WAS THE AMERICAN DREAM, SO HE JUST KEPT STRUGGLING.

"AND HE FINALLY GETS HIS DREAM, HIS OWN LITTLE CORNER STORE. HE'S BARELY SCRAPING BY, BUT HE'S HAPPIER THAN HELL. HE'S PART OF THE COMMUNITY.



"THEN ONE DAY, HIS HERO-- HELL, THE WHOLE CITY'S HERO-- GREEN LANTERN IS IN A ROOFTOP BRAWL WITH SOME MOOK CALLED THE SPORTSMASTER RIGHT ACROSS FROM HIS STORE.

"GRAMPA'S OUT THERE ON THE STREET WITH ALL THE REST OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD, CHEERING ON THEIR HERO. HE THOUGHT THIS GUY WAS LIKE A GOD OR SOMETHING.

"SOME GUY WITH ALL THAT POWER, PROTECTING THESE POOR IMMIGRANTS. POOR OLD GRAMPA COULDN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT.

"EXCEPT THAT DAY, THE GOD FELL DOWN ON THE JOB..."



"...AND MY GRAMPA LOST
EVERYTHING HE'D SPENT
HIS LIFE STRUGGLING FOR.



"WHAT DOES THE
BIG SHOT HERO
DO THEN?"

"HE RUNS
AWAY..."

SO THAT'S IT?
HE WAS LET DOWN
BY GREEN LANTERN,
SO HE **KILLED**
FIVE PEOPLE?

NO, SEE, IT'S
BIGGER THAN THAT...
SEE, CUZ ALL THAT
TIME HE WAS
STRUGGLING, HE
LOOKED UP TO
ALL THESE GUYS.
THE RICH MEN, THE
POLITICIANS, THE
HEROES.

BUT NOW HIS
HERO GETS TAKEN
OUT BY A **BASEBALL**
BAT? IT'S LIKE HIS
WHOLE LIFE WAS A
SHAM.

THESE GUYS PUT THEMSELVES
UP ON SOME HIGHER PLANE. THOUGHT
THEY WERE BETTER THAN ALL THE
LITTLE PEOPLE.

BUT THIS
BAT HERE BROUGHT
GREEN LANTERN
DOWN.

SPORTSMASTER

SO HE TOOK THIS BAT AND BASHED
THE MAYOR'S BRAINS IN FOR LYING TO THE
WHOLE CITY... FOR MAKING THEM WORSHIP
SOME FALSE GOD.

THEN HE CARVED HIM UP
AND LEFT HIM AT THE FEET OF
HIS OLD HERO. LET HIM KNOW
HE WAS NO **BETTER** THAN
ANYONE ELSE...

I NEVER
THOUGHT I
WAS.

NO...





DON'T
COME NEAR
ME, YOU
FREAKS!

YOU
FALSE
GODS!

I'M CALCULATING THE RISKS. CAN
I KNOCK THE GUN OUT OF HIS HAND
WITH A BATARANG BEFORE HE
PULLS THE TRIGGER? BUT GREEN
LANTERN DOESN'T STOP TO THINK...

DON'T...
DON'T DO THAT TO
YOURSELF...

WHY NOT? SO
YOU AND YOUR FREAK
FRIEND CAN PUT ME IN
PRISON FOR THE REST
OF MY LIFE?

ALL MY LIFE,
PEOPLE LIKE YOU BEEN
PUSHIN' ME AROUND...
CAN'T PUSH ME NO
MORE.

I DON'T
WANT TO PUSH
ANYONE AROUND,
FRANCIS... I'M
JUST A MAN.

HA!
RIGHT... A
MAN WHO CAN
FLY. A MAN
WITH A MAGIC
RING...

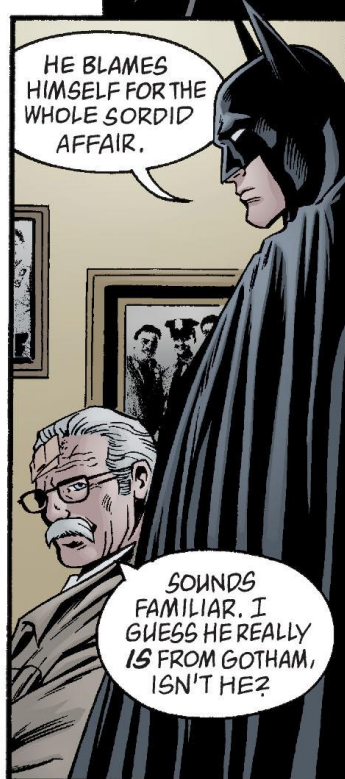
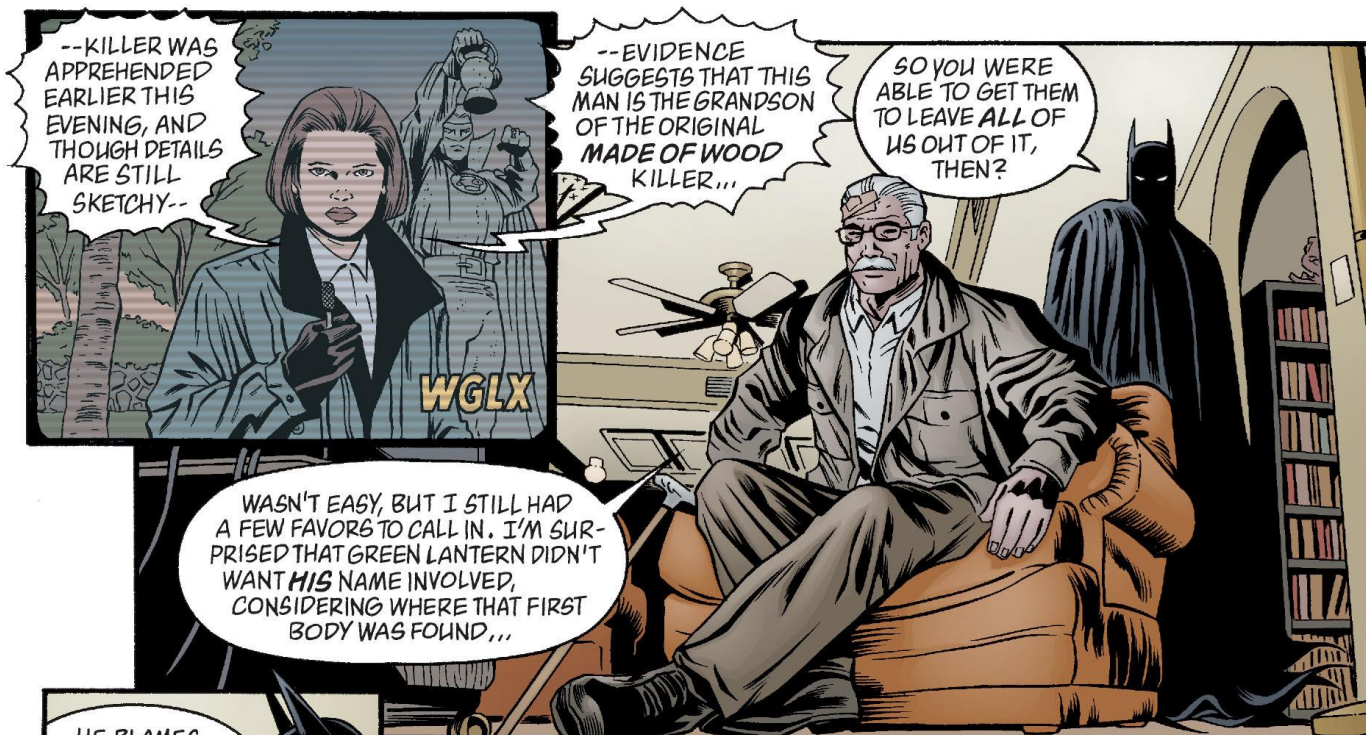
NO. I'M A MAN WHO
STUMBLED ACROSS A CHANCE
TO **HELP** OTHER PEOPLE. I
NEVER SET OUT TO BE
WORSHIPPED OR BE AN
EXAMPLE.

I NEVER CHOSE
TO BE ANYONE'S
HERO. I JUST WANTED
TO HELP EASE
SOME SUFFERING
WHEN I COULD...

THAT'S
WHAT PEOPLE
DO, FRANCIS,
THEY TRY THEIR
BEST AND THEY
STILL FAIL
SOMETIMES.

AND I'VE
FAILED A LOT.
I FAILED
THAT DAY
WHEN YOUR
GRANDFATHER
LOST HIS
STORE.





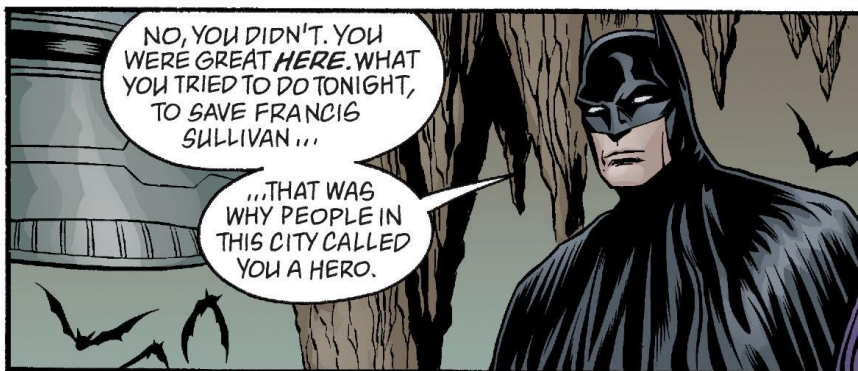


I'M SORRY ABOUT EARLIER. I JUST SAW AN OPPORTUNITY AND REACTED.

NO, DON'T APOLOGIZE. YOUR FRIEND WAS TIED TO A CHAIR AND A MADMAN WAS WAVING AROUND A GUN...



AS I SAID, IT'S GOTHAM... I FORGOT WHAT IT WAS LIKE HERE.



NO, YOU DIDN'T. YOU WERE GREAT HERE. WHAT YOU TRIED TO DO TONIGHT, TO SAVE FRANCIS SULLIVAN...

...THAT WAS WHY PEOPLE IN THIS CITY CALLED YOU A HERO.



ANYWAY, I SHOULD BE GETTING HOME. MOLLY STARTS WORRYING AFTER A FEW DAYS ALONE.

I LEFT YOU SOMETHING BY YOUR TROPHY CASES.

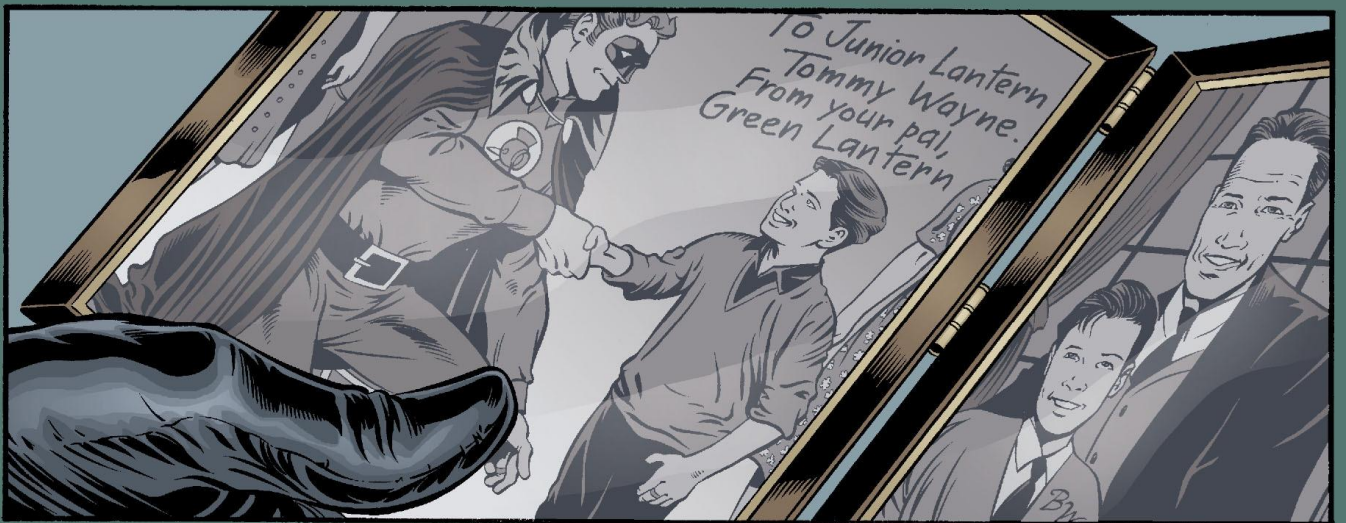
YOU-- WHAT?



JUST A TOKEN OF MY ESTEEM. IT WAS VERY INFORMATIVE, WORKING TOGETHER. SEEING HOW A REAL DETECTIVE THINKS.

MAYBE WE CAN DO THIS AGAIN SOMETIME...





Biographies

A one-time cartoonist, **ED BRUBAKER** has been working as a writer since the early 1990s, and in that time his work has won several awards, including both the Harvey and Eisner Awards for Best Writer in 2007, and has been translated around the world. His comics credits include BATMAN, CATWOMAN, GOTHAM CENTRAL and SLEEPER for DC/WildStorm and *Daredevil*, *Captain America* and *Criminal* for Marvel. He lives and works in Seattle, Washington with his wife, Melanie, and many pets.

Born in 1963 in the Year of the Rabbit, **DOUG MAHNKE** embarked on a love affair with comics at the age of five, having received a pile of *Spider-Man* issues from a rugby-playing college student named Mike who lived in his basement. A consistent interest in the medium, coupled with some art skill, landed Douga job drawing comics for Dark Horse at the age of 24 (the date is known precisely, as it occurred just two weeks before he wed his lovely bride). His first gig was illustrating a moody detective one-shot entitled *Homicide*, written by John Arcudi. The two went on to collaborate on Dark Horse's *The Mask* and their creator-owned series MAJOR BUMMER, originally published by DC. Since then Doug has worked on a wide variety of titles (including SUPERMAN: THE MAN OF STEEL, JLA, BATMAN, TEAM ZERO, SEVEN SOLDIERS: FRANKENSTEIN, BLACK ADAM: THE DARK AGE and STORMWATCH: P.H.D.) with such writers as Joe Kelly, Judd Winnick, Chuck Dixon, Grant Morrison, Christos Gage and Ed Brubaker, just to name a few. He resides in the midwest with his wife and six kids, one dog, and a bunny named Suzie.

PATRICK ZIRCHER has been drawing comics professionally for 15 years and insists that he's "just getting the hang of it." With over a hundred issues to his credit, his work has been featured in NIGHTWING, *Vampirella*, *Iron Man* and *Terror Inc.* The original Green Lantern is one of his favorite characters. Doiby Dickles is not. Patrick lives in Indiana with his wife, two children, and a black cat named Isis.

AARON SOWD has contributed to a wide variety of comics titles, including JLA, BATMAN: HARLEY QUINN, *The Uncanny X-Men*, *Weapon Zero* and his creator-owned comic *MasterMinds*. He has also created storyboards, conceptual designs and style guides for such films as *Transformers*, *Solaris*, *Austin Powers in Goldmember*, *Ultimate Avengers 2*, *God of War* and *Anastasia*, and his illustrations have appeared in *The New York Times*, *People*, *Time*, and *Playstation* magazines. Aaron teaches at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena and lives by the beach in Venice, California, where he resents the fact that he has no free time to enjoy it.



Stop it, you're killing me!

Even at the very beginning of his crime-fighting career, the Batman has already seen plenty of humanity's dark side — but it's nothing compared to what is about to emerge, giggling, from the shadows: a grinning, chalk-faced figure whose madness threatens to overwhelm everything that stands in its way.

For Gotham City's new defender, this first encounter with the creature called the Joker will be the ultimate trial by fire — a battle that will define his long struggle against the forces of chaos and insanity.

Years later, those same forces will erupt again from a wholly unexpected direction — and ghosts of the past, both good and evil, will have to face the harsh light of inquiry before they can finally rest.

Eisner and Harvey Award-winning writer **Ed Brubaker** (*GOTHAM CENTRAL*, *Captain America*) returns to Gotham's mean streets for two riveting tales of the World's Greatest Detective, accompanied by acclaimed artists **Doug Mahnke** (*JLA*, *The Mask*), **Patrick Zircher** (*NIGHTWING*, *Iron Man*) and **Aaron Sowd** (*THE BATMAN CHRONICLES*, *The Uncanny X-Men*).